This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

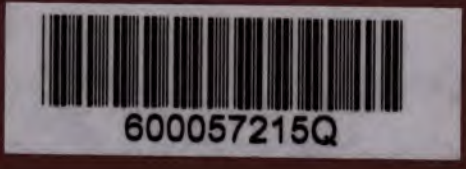
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

MARTHA


600057215Q

MARTHA.

VOL. II.

MARTHA.

BY

WILLIAM GILBERT,

AUTHOR OF

"LUCREZIA BORGIA," "SHIRLEY HALL ASYLUM,"

&c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

HURST AND BLACKETT, PUBLISHERS,

13, GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1871.

The right of Translation is reserved.

250. g 195.

LONDON :
PRINTED BY MACDONALD AND TUGWELL, BLENHEIM HOUSE,
BLENHEIM STREET, OXFORD STREET.

MARTHA.

CHAPTER I.

MARTHA'S BRIGHTER PROSPECTS.

WE must now take up the thread of our narrative in the lodging engaged for Martha by Dr. Wilson at Mrs. Mitchell's, the ex-matron of the hospital. The good effects produced by the stimulants swallowed at the Red House being neutralised by the fatigue occasioned by the drive in the brougham—short though it was—Martha remained for some days hovering between life and death. At last, thanks to the elasticity of a naturally good constitution, aided by the skill and care of the doctor and nurse, a turn for the better took place. Slowly, very slowly, her strength returned, but without being accompanied by the slightest mental improvement. So utterly paralysed did her mind ap-

pear, that for some time Dr. Wilson feared she was suffering from incurable softening of the brain. Fortunately, as it afterwards turned out, he was in error. When almost in despair on the subject, the nurse one morning informed him that in the course of the last evening his patient had spoken to her, and that she evidently quite understood the words she uttered. This was a step in the right direction, and without further remark the doctor hurried upstairs, and placing himself beside the bed, kindly inquired of Martha if she felt herself better. She looked at him for a moment, as though it occasioned her some effort to collect her thoughts, and then said, in a voice so subdued he could hardly hear it, that she felt stronger; and concluded by asking something about a letter, which he could not fully understand. Having tried in vain to catch her meaning, he contented himself with the belief that consciousness was returning, and advised her not to trouble herself about the letter that day, but that he would speak to her about it on the morrow. He directed that she should be kept perfectly quiet, and that no questions were to be asked of her;

but that if she volunteered any remarks, particular attention was to be paid to them, as he would like to be informed of their purport when he paid his visit next day. He also impressed on Mrs. Keats (the clergyman's wife) and her daughters, whose anxiety about Martha's recovery was very great, the necessity of his patient being kept perfectly quiet, and he particularly advised them not to speak to her on any subject until he gave them permission.

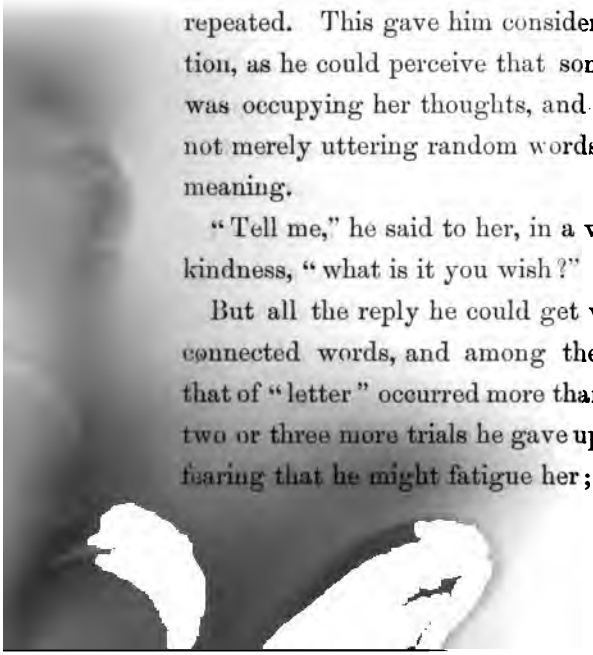
On the morrow, when Dr. Wilson arrived at the house, and before he entered the sick-room, he was told by Mrs. Mitchell that his patient was in much the same condition as when he had last seen her. Occasionally she had spoken, but only a few words at a time, and these without any particular meaning. It was possible, Mrs. Mitchell continued, that he might be better able to understand her; but, as he had strictly prohibited her from entering into any conversation with his patient till he should see her again, she had forborne to ask any explanations, especially as the words she uttered did not relate to an immediate want. For the last few hours, beyond appearing perhaps a little stronger, there

was no perceptible difference in her health.

The doctor now entered his patient's room, but for a few moments she did not seem to be aware of his presence, although her head was turned to the side of the bed at which he stood, and her eyes were open. Gradually, however, an expression of intelligence appeared in her countenance, and presently she seemed to recognize him. She gazed at him fixedly for some moments, and then her lips began to move. He bent his head towards her, and on listening attentively he could distinguish some words, and among them that of "letter" was several times repeated. This gave him considerable satisfaction, as he could perceive that some fixed idea was occupying her thoughts, and that she was not merely uttering random words without any meaning.

"Tell me," he said to her, in a voice of great kindness, "what is it you wish?"

But all the reply he could get was a few unconnected words, and among them, as before, that of "letter" occurred more than once. After two or three more trials he gave up the attempt, fearing that he might fatigue her; and then, re-



peating to Mrs. Mitchell the instructions he had given the day before, he left the house to make the round of his patients.

Although his mind was now occupied with other subjects, he could not entirely divest himself of the idea that the poor woman must have some special reason for dwelling upon, and repeating so often, the word "letter." Indeed, so frequently did his mind return to the subject, that he resolved, when his visits were over, to call on the Rev. Mr. Keats—who still took a deep interest in the poor woman's case—and consult with him as to what steps ought to be taken on her behalf. He fortunately found Mr. Keats at home, and told him the object of his visit.

"There can be no doubt," said Mr. Keats, "that she has been expecting to receive a letter from some one. Let us inquire at the Post-office whether one has come for her. I propose that we should go at once."

"With all my heart," said the doctor: "though, even supposing there should be one, I do not see what steps we can take in the matter. I hardly think the postmaster will consider himself justified in placing it in our hands; and, even

if he did, we could make nothing of it, as it is not ours."

"There is certainly some difficulty in that," said Mr. Keats; "but at any rate there will be no harm in our ascertaining whether any letter has really arrived for her."

When they reached the Post-office, the clerk, in reply to their question, told them that a letter had arrived addressed to Miss Thornbury, Red House, near X——. It was from India, and there was some postage to pay on it, which the policeman on duty at the house had declined to advance. The letter would be sent there again on the morrow, and if not received, would be returned to the Dead-letter Office. He could not, he said, place it in the hands of either the doctor or Mr. Keats, as it was contrary to rule. At the same time, if any one received it at the house for Miss Thornbury, all responsibility would be taken off his shoulders.

Acting upon this very plain hint, the doctor and Mr. Keats next proceeded to the Police Station, and saw the inspector. They requested him to send a messenger to the policeman on duty at the Red House, with orders that, when

the letter was presented next day, the postage was to be paid, and that it was to be forwarded to Dr. Wilson, who would take charge of it for his patient. The inspector having agreed to this arrangement, Dr. Wilson and his friend separated.

Next day the worthy doctor received the letter, but what to do with it, now that he had it, puzzled him exceedingly. He sent for Mr. Keats to advise him in the matter, and after due consideration they came to the conclusion that they could not open it without receiving permission from the owner, as it would be an act of gross indiscretion,—and yet the patient was not in a condition to give any one authority to read it. Again, the doctor was somewhat doubtful as to the effect it might produce on her if she were told that it had arrived. At present, the only sign of intelligence she showed was that of anxiety. If the letter should contain pleasing news, the excitement might be beneficial to her, but of that he was by no means certain; while, on the contrary, if the letter told of any misfortune or trouble, the most prejudicial effects might be apprehended. Another circumstance,

however, rendered the knowledge of its contents exceedingly desirable. It might contain money, or at any rate advice of some to be received; and on that point both the doctor and the clergyman were somewhat anxious. The former, indeed, said that he would be most willing to render her his services gratuitously, should she require them; but he had made himself answerable for her current expenses as well, and although these were far from being great, he hardly considered himself called upon to pay them, out of justice to his own family. Mr. Keats perfectly agreed with him in the view he took of the matter, and they now conversed together in order to find a way out of their difficulty, but without success. At last they resolved to delay all further consideration of the subject until the next morning. Then perhaps she might be better able to understand them, and they could determine what course to adopt.

On the morrow the doctor, accompanied by his friend, called to see his patient, and found her progressing slowly but favourably. She appeared somewhat more intelligent, and several times mentioned the letter. The doctor asked

her where she expected it to come from, but failed to make her understand the question. Presently he inquired whether it was from India, and at the word a ray of intelligence flashed across her face. He now felt certain that he had in his possession the letter she was so anxious about, and he promised her—though possibly without her fully understanding him—that he would make inquiries about it. On further consideration, he concluded that it would be more prudent to abstain from showing it to her for a few days. In the interim she recovered so rapidly, that he determined on trying the experiment, and taking Mr. Keats with him, he showed her the letter, and then asked if he should read it for her, to which she nodded assent.

The letter was from Edgar. In it he expressed himself deeply grieved at his mother's death, though at her advanced period of life such a misfortune might naturally have been looked for. He greatly praised Martha for the attention she had so willingly shown to her parents, and assured her, not only of his love, but also of his gratitude for the part she had

taken in comforting their declining years. He regretted the straitened circumstances she had been in, but assured her his position was now so well established that she should never again be in danger of suffering any privation. He then went into some detail about his own affairs. He told her he had married Miss Macdonald, the only daughter of his employer; that her father (as he had before stated) was of very penurious habits, and had refused to give her any dowry, comforting his son-in-law for the disappointment he might possibly have felt by saying that, as he had no relative in the world besides his child, she would ultimately inherit whatever little property he might die possessed of. As Mr. Macdonald was, in appearance, a very hearty man at the time, the reversion to his property seemed somewhat remote; but he (Edgar) consoled himself with the knowledge that every shilling accumulated by his father-in-law would ultimately come into his own hands. He therefore submitted with perfect good will to the old gentleman's excuse, the more readily, too, as he knew the business was annually increasing, and the profits becoming

very large. Edgar then went on to say that, contrary to all expectation, Mr. Macdonald had died suddenly. On opening his will, which had been made some years previous to his daughter's marriage, he was found to be a man of large fortune—and the whole was left to his child. Edgar could not state what was the amount of Mr. Macdonald's wealth, as it would be some time before the estate could be wound up; but, at present, besides the business, he could perceive that the property would realise at least a hundred thousand pounds. He had determined, as soon as affairs were a little further advanced—say in three months' time—to leave India with his wife, on a visit to England; and, indeed, it was probable that he might remain there permanently. Everything would depend upon the conduct of his nephews. If they continued as steady as they had hitherto been, he should never again return to India. He had entered into partnership with the gentleman with whom he had placed Edgar, his younger nephew; and his intentions were, that if during his residence in England he found that his two nephews kept steadily to business, he should

retire from the firm, leaving his share in it entirely to them. With respect to the Red House, he advised Martha to leave it, if she thought proper, and place it under the charge of some respectable house agent till his return, when he intended, after making considerable alterations, to reside in it himself; and he sincerely trusted that she would occupy it with him. For her present necessities he enclosed her a bill of exchange for two hundred pounds; and he further informed her that he had established a credit for her with his agent in London for a like sum, should she require it.

The reading of the letter, so far from having any ill effect on Martha, seemed on the contrary to exercise a most beneficial influence. At the same time, the doctor thought that it would be advisable not to prolong the conversation that day, and Mr. Keats and himself left the house, promising that he would see her on the morrow. Next day the atony had returned to such an extent that Dr. Wilson began to regret the step he had taken. He tried for some time to elicit signs of intelligence, but in vain; and he left the house much disappointed and depressed

at the change for the worse in his patient. It was some days before she regained the condition she was in before the letter was read to her.

Gradually, however, Martha's fits of atony diminished, not only in frequency, but in duration, and as she improved, the doctor withdrew his objection to conversation with his patient, and Mrs. Keats with her two daughters, Fanny and Ellen, were now frequent visitors. So far from any prejudicial results arising from their interviews with Martha, they seemed, on the contrary, to be attended with great advantage. Still the fits of somnolency occasionally returned, nor could the doctor with his utmost care and ability avert them. He now began to be fairly puzzled what course to pursue; Martha's bodily health having increased greatly, while the fits of somnolency still from time to time showed themselves.

The most cheering feature in her malady was, that each succeeding relapse was shorter than the former, while her mind, in the intervals, increased in power to such a degree that it was not easy to detect anything wrong with it. She

spoke of her affairs, and her brother's return, with perfect lucidity, and expressed her great anxiety as to the fate of Deborah. She had, with perfect consciousness, signed the receipt for the money sent her by Edgar, and had agreed to the proposal made by the doctor, that it should be lodged with the bankers in the town, and that she should, from time to time, draw from it such small sums as she might require. She gave orders that advertisements should be inserted in the newspapers, offering a reward to any one who could give her any information about Deborah; and she further requested the inspector of police to use any means he thought advisable to gain some intelligence of the poor old Quakeress. She also placed the Red House in the hands of an estate-agent, determining to follow the doctor's advice not to return to it till her health was sufficiently re-established, or till her brother should arrive in England.

A circumstance now occurred which gave Dr. Wilson an opportunity of sharing the responsibility of Martha's case with a brother practitioner. He had long wished to hold a consultation with some physician of eminence who was

learned in diseases of the brain, but there was no one resident in the neighbourhood of X—— of sufficient experience on the subject to confer with. The Rev. Mr. Keats had a brother, a physician, in extensive practice, residing in the neighbourhood of Torquay, who had formerly paid great attention to maladies of this description. This gentleman was now on the point of paying a visit, of a week or ten days, to his brother, whom he had not seen for some years; and Dr. Wilson resolved to consult him on Martha's case. On his arrival, Dr. Wilson requested him to visit his patient with him, which Dr. Keats willingly agreed to do. They found Martha in one of her fits of somnolency, from which they had great difficulty in arousing her. When fully awake, she spoke lucidly, but it was quite evident that she did so with great effort—the desire to sleep again being plainly apparent. At last they left her, and retired to Mrs. Mitchell's sitting-room to consult on the case. Dr. Wilson gave his professional brother a full description of Martha's malady, and the means that he had adopted to stay it, though with but partial success. "Her whole career," said Dr. Wilson,

"is a perfect illustration of that cat-like attachment which some women have to the home they have been brought up in. The poor creature would have starved outright rather than have quitted the house—in fact, she was almost *in articulo mortis* when I was called in to see her."

"How do you account for these fits of somnolency?" inquired Dr. Keats. "Her strong attachment to the house would hardly have produced them."

"On that point I admit I am quite puzzled," was the reply; "unless the extreme debility arising from her protracted starvation may have had something to do with it."

"That could hardly have had the effect in her case," said Dr. Keats; "for her mind would have recovered its healthy tone at least as rapidly as her bodily health. You say she is much stronger than she was when you first saw her, and that she gains flesh daily. Now, my opinion is that she is suffering from some terrible excitement, which we have not yet heard of. The mind has probably been over-fatigued, and the unconscious state she is now so frequently in is simply a dreamless sleep, which is recruiting her

mind, as ordinary rest would restore her body. It is really a most extraordinary case; and I should much like, if possible, to get at the real facts of it."

"I much suspect you will find out nothing more than what I have told you. I think I mentioned that the sorrow she displayed at the death of her mother, whom I attended in her last illness, was so great that at the moment I almost feared it would leave some lasting and serious impression on her brain."

"You did; but if I understand you correctly, her mother has been dead for some time. Intense grief might at the time have taken such a form as to have justified your conclusions: but time would have greatly mitigated that; and even supposing it had not, I do not think it would have shown itself in its present phase. I am fully convinced there is more in her case than we have yet discovered. Do you know much of her previous history?"

"Very little."

"Is she naturally an intelligent woman, and well educated? My sister-in-law and her daughters speak very highly of her, and

seem to have taken a great fancy to her."

"From what I have seen of her," said Dr. Wilson, "she seems to have been well educated, and is a very mild and amiable woman ; but beyond that I know very little of her. Her brother is a merchant in India, and is shortly expected in this country. I understand he is a man of large fortune; but, from what I gather from her, she has no other relatives."

"Her case is a very singular one, certainly," said Dr. Keats, after a moment's reflection, "and I should like to study it. As I have said before, I am convinced her mind must have received some terrible shock, and that there is not one iota of insanity in her malady. Where does she intend to reside when she leaves this house?"

"I cannot inform you, nor do I believe she knows herself. I have advised her not to return to her old home, and she has consented to leave it—indeed, it is now in the hands of an estate agent, who will take charge of it until her brother's return."

"I intend taking my niece, Fanny, back with me," said Dr. Keats, "and the girl appears to

have taken a great fancy to your patient: do you think she could be persuaded to accompany her?"

"I have no doubt she would willingly do so," was the reply; "and the more readily as she is very fond of your niece. All things considered, I think this is, perhaps, the best thing that could be done in her case. Change of air and scene would be the best alteratives that could be prescribed for her."

The next day, a great improvement was visible in Martha. Dr. Wilson, as had been previously arranged, suggested to her on his visit that change of air and scene would be beneficial to her, and inquired if she had any friends or relatives in the South of England, whom she could visit for some time. To this, Martha replied that she knew no one whatever. Dr. Wilson then merely remarked that it was a pity, as he believed the air of Devonshire would have a most salutary effect on her. And he then changed the conversation to another subject, leaving it for Mrs. Keats and the young ladies to broach the matter to her more explicitly. In the afternoon the ladies called on Martha. She

informed them of the doctor's visit in the morning, and of his advice to her to try the air of the South of England, and, she continued, that she felt strongly disposed to follow his suggestion, if any one could tell her of a nice place to choose. The cue being given, Fanny immediately remarked, "Why do you not come to Torquay with me? I am sure my uncle would be delighted to take charge of you on the road, and advise you how to proceed on your arrival. Little as he has seen of you, I assure you you are a great favourite of his."

Of course Martha demurred to the proposition, saying that she should not like to trouble Dr. Keats, and so on. There was no difficulty in perceiving, however, that the suggestion was a most acceptable one to her. After a little more conversation on the subject—Martha still persevering in her objections—Fanny said to her, laughing at the time, "I will argue the matter with you no further, as I see you are too obstinate for me to manage. I will send my uncle to you presently, and try if he has more influence over you than I have." Later in the day, Dr. Keats called on Martha, and, as Fanny

had predicted, he easily won her over. Before he left her, it was agreed that she should not only go with him and Fanny to Torquay, but that he would also write to his wife by that night's post, to make arrangements to receive her into his own house.

Next day, Martha left Mrs. Mitchell's house for the first time since she had gone to lodge there. Her bodily strength being now quite equal to the exertion, Mrs. Keats accompanied her to different shops to make purchases, for her wardrobe was at a very low ebb—in fact, everything she then wore had been lent to her by the Keats' family. She afterwards spent the evening with them, and then returned home, suffering a little from the fatigue she had undergone.

The time was now fast approaching for Dr. Keats to return home; and Martha had everything ready for the journey. She hailed with pleasure the idea of quitting X——, as, her story being now well known in the town, she was occasionally much annoyed by the remarks she heard made upon her as she passed; not that they were uncomplimentary, but she naturally had an objection to being made an object

of curiosity with strangers. Before leaving X——, she visited the inspector of police, and stimulated him to increased exertion, by doubling the amount of reward she had offered, to obtain some information of Deborah, of whom nothing had as yet been heard.

The day arrived for them to leave X——, and Martha (after taking farewell of her kind friends, and remunerating Dr. Wilson for his medical attendance, so far as money could do it) started on her journey to Torquay, in company with Dr. Keats and Fanny.

CHAPTER II.

MARTHA'S PHANTOM FAMILY.

BEYOND a considerable amount of anxiety to the doctor, little occurred in the journey to Torquay worth mentioning. The weather was fine, and for some time Martha seemed greatly interested in all she saw, and the time passed pleasantly enough for all parties. The first forty miles, however, which had to be performed in a carriage before reaching the great railway station at Y——, had somewhat fatigued her, and when in the train the symptoms of depression which were generally the forerunners of her fits of atony became apparent; but, thanks to the efforts of the doctor and Fanny Keats to keep up the conversation, these vanished, and she supported the remainder of the journey much better than might have been expected. When

they reached their destination, however, so strongly marked on her countenance and frame were the effects of the fatigue she had undergone during the day, that the doctor insisted on her immediately retiring to her room, sorely to the regret of Mrs. Keats and the children, who had been awaiting her arrival with much impatience.

Martha's condition the next morning clearly proved that the doctor had done wisely in insisting on her early retirement the evening before. In fact, her state of somnolency when Fanny Keats entered Martha's bed-room the following morning appeared to be as profound as when she was at the house of Mrs. Mitchell the morning after she had been removed to it by the doctor. Fanny, after in vain attempting to arouse her, grew greatly alarmed, and rushed downstairs to call the assistance of the doctor. He was from home, however, at the time, but his wife accompanied Fanny to Martha's room, where, on discovering the state of her guest, she became scarcely less alarmed than her niece. She immediately despatched messengers to find the doctor, who shortly afterwards returned to

the house, and proceeded to his patient's room. After feeling her pulse, and finding it tolerably full, he calmed the fears of his wife and niece by assuring them that profound as the somnolency appeared, their friend would shortly recover from it, and very possibly, even in the evening of that day she would be able to join their family circle. Before leaving X—— he had fully satisfied himself that her fits of atony or somnolency were simply profound mental fatigue after violent excitement. He judged that her present condition had been caused partially by fatigue, but more so by the variety of scenes they had passed on their road, which had wearied her brain, and she was then suffering in consequence, but he was fully convinced she would in a few hours recover from the effect.

The doctor was perfectly correct in his conclusion, for in a few hours Martha awoke as from a heavy, dreamless sleep. Indeed, so rapid was her recovery, that she was able to join the family at the dinner-table, and even proposed accompanying them in a walk by the sea-shore in the evening. This, however, the doctor

would not allow, and Martha remained with the family at home. Mrs. Keats appeared to take great interest in her guest, who, on her part, seemed equally pleased with her hostess and her family. In fact, the good impression produced on all sides was so deep, that before the family separated for the night, it was agreed that Martha should remain with them during her stay in Torquay.

Things now went on smoothly enough for some time, Martha each day becoming a greater favourite with the family. She had conceived a great friendship for Mrs. Keats, and interested herself much in the children. Some of the younger ones were educated at home by their mother, and Martha, possibly bearing in mind the time when she was herself instructress to poor Charity's children, assisted Mrs. Keats in her scholastic duties, thereby greatly increasing the esteem the worthy lady had entertained for her. Martha's great friend, however, was Fanny Keats, who was a pretty, lively, amiable girl, about nineteen or twenty years of age. Although so much her junior, Martha seemed to make Fanny her especial confidant, and would

frequently speak to her on family matters with much feeling.

Before Martha had resided a fortnight under the doctor's care, her fits of somnolency had entirely disappeared, and before a month had elapsed since her arrival in Torquay, her health appeared fully re-established. Even the fits of taciturnity under which she at first occasionally suffered had entirely vanished, and she was the lively companion of Mrs. Keats and Fanny, and the darling of the children, each of whom seemed to consider the kind-hearted and patient old maid as his or her own especial confidant and adviser. Had it not been for one source of anxiety, Martha's life would now have been one of perfect happiness, and that was the absence of any intelligence respecting Deborah, of whom she frequently wrote to Dr. Wilson, and the inspector of police at X——, unfortunately without ever receiving any satisfactory reply, even so far as to prove they were on her track.

Doctor Keats, now considering Martha's health to be fully re-established, determined to satisfy himself as to the cause of the peculiar mental malady under which she had been labouring.

As before stated, he had fully made up his mind that it neither arose from the catlike affection which some women in their misfortune will show to the house they have long resided in, and where perchance many of the most interesting episodes of their lives have passed, nor was it the effect of protracted starvation. He was fully convinced, on the contrary, that Martha's peculiar symptoms had been caused by some terrible mental excitement acting on an already debilitated frame, and he now resolved to question her on the subject. He commenced by conversing more particularly on her family affairs, with the intention of discovering something which might lead him to form a conclusion as to the origin of her malady. With great tact he insinuated himself into her confidence, and at last obtained from her a lucid description of certain events which clearly proved he had been perfectly correct in the conclusion he had arrived at.

It appeared that, for the first day or two after Deborah's departure, Martha found the profound silence of the house somewhat oppressive, although, as was before stated, little or no con-

versation had passed between her and the old servant. By degrees this went off, and she became more accustomed to her absolute solitude. The sole mental occupation she now had was reminiscences of different episodes in her life at the Red House. At last, by continually reflecting on them, they presented themselves to her imagination with perfect minuteness and life-like reality, the smallest detail connected with them being clearly present. Again, the very objects of furniture became to her as documentary evidence—proofs strong as Holy Writ—of different circumstances in her history. They became the collateral physical witnesses or records of events written on her brain—the present visible proofs of occurrences of interest to her and her family.

She now began to place the different articles of furniture in the position with which they were each particularly identified. The old easy chair which her father had so long occupied beside the fire-place, was moved to its original position, and opposite to it she placed the one in which her mother used to sit. Beside the table she placed the seat old Deborah was wont

to occupy after the labours of the day were over; the large old Bible, she had been in the habit of reading every night, remained open at the page where she had left it the evening before her departure. The bed on which her poor sister had died had never been removed or used since her death; and that on which her mother had spent the last few days of her life, and in which Deborah used afterwards to sleep, was with great difficulty placed by Martha in the position it had formerly occupied, it having been removed by the old servant to another spot she had considered more desirable. Martha even went so far as to bring down from the garret to her own room an old cot, in which her little brother, whom she had lost in early childhood, had slept. Other articles of furniture less connected with our narrative were also put in places she remembered them to have occupied when the events connected with them occurred.

Although it was with painful difficulty that she employed her mind on subjects unconnected with her family, and although she had an earnest wish to wholly abstract herself from the outer

world, yet considerations of serious importance would, from time to time, thrust themselves before her, and so forcibly that it was impossible to ignore them. Her little stock of money was daily diminishing—a few shillings only were left. A portion of this she was obliged to reserve, in case it should be required for the payment of her brother's letter, and the remainder she had to eke out as sparingly as she could. It might be argued that, by disposing of the furniture, she might have been still supplied with necessaries till an answer came to the letter she had written to her brother in Bengal. But it should be remembered that the slow starvation she was enduring, by lessening her vital powers, increased the sad effects her sorrows were causing on her mind, and brought on a numbing apathy, and an inability to cope with the difficulties of her position.

One evening, after counting over her little store, and setting apart as much as would pay for the few necessaries Giles would bring next day, she placed the candle as usual on the table. She did not light it yet, because it was not totally dark, and, as it was her only remaining

candle, she wished to make it last as long as possible. She then seated herself on the floor beside the few embers that burnt in the grate, and began to reflect on the peculiarities of her position. For the first time the idea presented itself of the possibility of death being near her. Her strength had been daily diminishing, and for some time she could not disguise from herself the fact, that the amount of nourishment she was taking was insufficient for the support of life.

She remained motionless for some time in deep thought, which was disturbed by the falling together of the cinders in the grate. She now perceived that the fire was dying out, and that it was necessary for her to light a candle, or she must remain all night in the dark. Turning partially round, she took the candle from the table, and after lighting it, she placed it on the ground beside her, and then remained for some time longer in the same position.

She now brought to mind the dear ones she had lost, and the probability of her soon rejoining them. She thought of the misfortunes of her poor father, and the lamentable condition he

was in before death released him from his sufferings. Her mother and her long illness now came before her; and then her mind reverted to Deborah, and she endeavoured to arrive at some reason for her continued silence. She next thought of Charity, now an angel in heaven, and her promise to watch over her. Other episodes, each unconnected with the rest, slowly passed before her memory; all her thoughts at last culminating in the certainty she felt of her own approaching death. At length, heaving a deep sigh, she said gently, but aloud, "Thy will be done;" and then rose from the ground to place the candle on the table. She remained motionless, with the candle in her hand, struck with awe and surprise, though without the slightest mixture of fear. Before her, in the seat she had been accustomed to occupy, sat Deborah, in the neat white quaker-cap and kerchief she habitually wore; her hands clasped before her on her lap, her lips moving as if in prayer, her general appearance being exactly the same as when Martha had seen her the evening before she left the house.

Martha, breathless and silent, sunk into a chair

on the opposite side of the table, placing the light in such a position on it as not to keep her from plainly seeing Deborah, whom she now watched with astonishment. Deborah, with the exception of the slight movement of her lips, remained as motionless and as silent as a statue. She seemed not to take the slightest notice of Martha, or even to be aware of her presence. Although the old servant sat there as perfectly distinct, and to all appearance as palpable as when Martha last saw her, yet from some indescribable impression she felt that her companion was not of this world, but a spirit. It was now clear to her that Deborah was no more, and that she had been sent to her for some especial reason, most probably to warn her of her own approaching death. For some time Martha's wonder prevented her from collecting her thoughts, but at last, as if she shared in the same feeling as Deborah, she commenced a silent prayer. She besought the Almighty to grant her the power to submit with resignation to His will, that her sins might be forgiven her, and that she might be received into heaven at her death.

In this manner more than two hours passed, and no word had been spoken by either, when suddenly the candle went out, leaving Martha in total darkness. This changed the current of her thoughts, and for the first time she spoke to Deborah; but she received no answer, and, moreover, had a certain instinctive feeling that the phantom was no longer there. She felt no inclination to move; but remained motionless on her chair, and attempted to pray, but without succeeding. An extraordinary apathy seemed occasionally to come over her during the night, which was in no respect like sleep; and yet she had no power of thinking with any consciousness. In this manner she remained till the light of early dawn was thrown into the room; and she then looked anxiously towards the chair Deborah had occupied, but she was no longer there. Broad day soon filled the room, and Martha awoke to the stern reality of her position.

She now left her seat, and wandered about the house without other purpose than to restore the circulation in her limbs, which had become benumbed by the coldness of the room. As the day advanced, she took down from a shelf a roll

of bread, and ate a portion of it, which, with a cup of water, constituted her breakfast; the remainder of the roll being put aside for her dinner. This being the day Giles should visit the house, she remained in the usual sitting-room till he came, and then taking from him another roll of bread and some candles, she closed the wicket and again entered the room. Here she remained in a state of half stupor, from which she did not recover till late in the afternoon, when she resolved to take her second meal, and seek her bedroom, and try if possible to obtain a little rest. After she had eaten the remainder of the roll, she placed a candle in the candlestick together with some matches, that she might get a light when she awoke, should it be night. Deborah's apparition the evening before seemed now no longer to cause any surprise when she thought of it. She almost began to look at it in the light of a dream, but still it was floating hazily in her memory when she fell asleep.

It was dark night when Martha awoke. She stretched out her hand for the candle, and having lighted it, she proceeded downstairs

considerably refreshed by her sleep. On entering the sitting-room she found Deborah again in it; but she had somewhat altered her position from that of the night before. She sat in the same chair; but was leaning over the Bible on the table, and apparently reading it attentively. Martha stopped for a moment, and a thrill of awe passed over her; but recovering herself, she advanced towards the table and placed the light on it. Still the old woman paid not the slightest attention to her presence, and continued her reading, pointing, as was her wont, to each successive sentence with her finger as she went on. Suddenly Martha's surprise vanished, and she looked over the old woman as she read. The Bible at the time was open at the 22nd Psalm, and at the moment Martha fixed her eyes on the book, Deborah's finger was pointing to the 24th verse.

"For He hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath He hid his face from him; but when he cried unto Him, He heard.

"My praise shall be of Thee in the great con-

gregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear Him."

"The meek shall eat and be satisfied; they shall praise the Lord that seek Him: your heart shall live for ever."

When Deborah's finger had reached the last line, it stopped there, marking the place; and then she slowly raised her eyes from the book, and turning her head towards Martha, regarded her fixedly, as if she wished especially to direct her attention to these verses. This was the first sign Deborah had given of being aware of Martha's presence. After gazing some seconds in Martha's face, she resumed her reading as before, marking with her finger each succeeding line.

For some short time Martha again fixed her eyes on the book, but presently raising them without any definite reason, she saw her father seated on a chair by the opposite side of the fire-place, and in the dress he wore when she had last seen him. There he was, as perfectly plain in every respect as if he had been in life. His lack-lustre eye was fixed on the fire-place; he moved not, nor gave the slightest indication that

he was aware of her presence; there he sat, to all appearance as devoid of intelligence as he had been during the last few years of his life.

When Martha had fully realised her father's presence, she felt a painful sensation of surprise, but totally unmingled with fear. She advanced towards him, and sat opposite to his chair, thus thinking to attract his attention; but he took no notice of her. She attempted to speak to him, but her voice, as on the previous evening, when she turned to address Deborah, completely failed her. Her eyes now began to fill with tears; she moved to her seat near the table, and leaning her head upon it, gave full vent to her grief. Her sorrow had hardly exhausted itself when she raised her head, and saw indistinctly through her tears a form seated on the chair opposite her father. Clearing her eyes a little, she saw before her the phantom of her mother, as she had seen her seated there on the evening of her death. For the first time a feeling of terror came over Martha,—so strong that she would certainly have sunk under it, had it not been that the phantom turned its head towards her, and cast on her a look of such exquisite

tenderness and love, that her fear immediately vanished. Martha would have risen and thrown herself on her knees before it, but the phantom, as if aware of her intention, made a deprecatory movement with its hand. Martha obeyed the silent injunction, and remaining seated, returned the look of love her mother had cast upon her.

For some moments a sort of mute sympathetic conversation passed between them, filling Martha's heart with calm delight. It was broken at last by the phantom of her mother turning towards Deborah—who, apparently aware of the presence of her mistress, had ceased reading, and bent her eyes on her, as if awaiting some sign. The phantom now joined its hands, as if in prayer; Deborah and Martha both followed its example. They continued thus in prayer, taking no further notice of each other's presence. Hour after hour passed in this manner, Martha feeling, as the time went on, that she was each moment approaching nearer to eternity. She was pleased with the idea that she was about to die, and looked upon the near advance of death with a feeling of intense happiness. In this frame of mind she

continued till the first faint dawn of day, when the phantoms seemed to become less distinct to her vision. As the day advanced they seemed to dissolve in its light. Slowly and imperceptibly they continued to disappear, and gradually became mere shadowy outlines, and before the broad day had fully broken on the world, they had completely vanished. Now, as on the morning before, the realistic light of day showed all objects in their true forms and colours, and Martha felt a dead chilly coldness come over her again. By exercise she somewhat recovered warmth and circulation; but an extraordinary weakness oppressed her. The little exercise she had taken, which was merely walking about in her room, had fatigued her excessively; and—strange to say—she experienced a feeling of intense satisfaction in it. Although the broad glare of day had done much to relieve her mind from the associations of the past night, she felt that she was gradually sinking, and she rejoiced at it. When the hour for breakfast arrived, she had no appetite; but nevertheless, she went mechanically into the kitchen and took a piece of the roll she had

purchased the day before. She could not eat it, however; so putting it back again, she contented herself with a glass of water. As the day advanced, she began to feel the strange painful weight that had oppressed her the day before. In the afternoon she sought her room, and swallowed, without the least appetite, a few mouthfuls of bread, which served for her dinner. After lying down on her bed, it was some time before she fell asleep, but when she did, her sleep was most profound.

It was far in the night before she awoke, but she knew not the hour, having for some weeks past ceased to take any account of time. Before quitting her bed, she sat for some minutes in the dark, endeavouring to collect her thoughts. They quickly centred on the event of the night before; and the wish again became strong within her to be with her phantoms. So agitated and anxious to rejoin them did she become, that it was with difficulty she contrived to obtain a light. Having at last succeeded, she left the room, the attraction which drew her becoming greater the nearer she approached the sitting-room. She felt certain that she should there

again meet with those loved ones; but Charity, her beloved sister, where was she?

The idea had hardly crossed her brain, when she passed the open door of Charity's room. She could not repress a vague thought that she perceived some indistinct white figure within the room. She paused, and held up the candle to ascertain what it might be, but as the flickering light could not reach far, nought was visible save the usual furniture the room contained. As she proceeded downstairs, that singular sensation we have all felt of some one unheard and unseen being near us, came over her with peculiar force. On reaching the hall it became more vivid, and she felt certain that some one was beside her; but when she entered the sitting-room the feeling entirely passed off, and her attention was directed to the scene before her. On the same seat she had occupied the previous night, sat Deborah, reading from the open Bible on the table, and pointing as usual to each succeeding line as she read. Her father was in the easy chair beside the fireplace, his back to the window, and his vacant unconscious gaze fixed on the grate; opposite to him, in the dress

in which she had last seen her, sat her mother. As Martha advanced with her light into the room, they all seemed to be aware of her presence. Deborah ceased reading, but kept her finger resting as a mark on the line where she had left off, and, turning her head in the direction of the new comer, looked kindly at her. The phantom of her mother bent forward in her chair, as it seemed, the better to see Martha, Deborah being seated in a line with her. Even her father turned round his head and smiled at her with evident recognition. Martha speechless, advanced towards them, and seated herself in the same chair she had occupied the evening before. A feeling of intense and almost unearthly happiness came over her as she met their concentrated, loving gaze.

By degrees Martha began to wonder why her beloved sister Charity did not appear among them. Her surprise at length became so great that she almost seemed to forget the presence of the other phantoms. Presently an irresistible attraction drew her attention from them to the other side of the chair. She turned slowly round, and perceived standing beside her the

form of her dear sister, clad as on the night when Charity imagined she had received an intimation from heaven that she and her baby would shortly die. A singular expression was on the features of the phantom. While they preserved the appearance of Charity as she was in life, there was yet mingled with it an angelic beauty which evidently was not of this world. Martha's surprise at her sister's apparition did not last longer than a moment, for starting from her seat, and turning to it with outstretched arms, she exclaimed—

"Charity, my loved one——"

At the sound of Martha's voice the phantom vanished. Astonishment for the moment superseded all other feelings, and completely overcame her. She turned to the rest, as if to ask for an explanation of her sister's disappearance; but not one of them was to be seen—all had fled. The chairs of her father and mother were empty, Deborah had disappeared, and Martha was alone in the large and dimly lighted room. A feeling of despair came upon her when she found herself thus deserted by those she so fondly loved. She walked distractedly up and

down the room, her hands clasped and pressed on her breast, as she exclaimed, passionately and sorrowfully,

"Oh, Charity! my own Charity! come back to me! Mother, dear mother! where are you? What have I done to offend you all that you desert me so cruelly? For pity's sake come back! What have I done to offend you all? Pity me! pity me!"

No reply of any kind was given, and no notice seemed to be taken of her implorings, and she remained the whole night in deep grief, calling frequently for the return of those who had so suddenly left her.

The morning found her in a condition of bodily depression, which mental excitement alone kept her from sinking under. The feeling of apathy she had experienced the two previous days did not in the slightest degree come over her. She roamed incessantly, but now silently, through the deserted rooms of the house, finding no rest for the sole of her foot. At last the excitement began to abate somewhat; and so great was her exhaustion, that it warned her of the necessity of taking some

nourishment. She swallowed a few mouthfuls of bread, but with so much difficulty that the effort was positively painful to her. She put aside the roll which she had been eating, and began to reflect whether it would not be better for her to abstain from food altogether, that her sorrows might the sooner end, and that she might join in another world those who had now fled from her. The wickedness of these thoughts became apparent to her, however, and the wish soon arose to know whether the phantoms would not again visit her the next evening; so she gave up the idea of voluntarily starving herself. She again took the roll, and with great resolution, contrived to eat nearly the half of it; and after having taken a draught of water, she earnestly prayed that God would grant her the strength of mind to support her in her great need. Her prayer finished, she became calmer, and remained quietly seated for some hours, when her fatigue became so great that she resolved to seek her room, and obtain, if possible, a few hours' rest.

On entering the bed-room, her eye alighted on the cot her little brother had slept in. It

elicited no particular thought or feeling, however, and she fixed her gaze on it simply in obedience to the habit, common to all when in deep thought, of gazing intently on something utterly devoid of interest, while the mind is actually employed on some other and totally different subject. It was so at this moment with Martha—much as she had loved the child, she thought not of him at the time; her mind being absorbed in the probable return of the phantoms when it should be night. She threw herself, dressed as she was, on the bed, and after some time fell into a disturbed yet dreamless slumber. It was dark when she awoke, and she lighted her candle to proceed downstairs. As she was passing out of the room her gaze fell instinctively on the child's cot; it was only for an instant, however, and she gave no thought to the subject. As she descended the staircase she became very anxious, for she dreaded, on entering the room, that she might find it without her phantom visitors. When she had reached it, beyond the chairs remaining in their usual places, and the open Bible on the table before Deborah's seat, there was nothing to re-

mind her of its occupants of the evening before. With a heavy heart she placed the light on the table and sunk into a chair, her eyes the while filling with tears.

Suddenly she dashed away her tears, and gazed intently on some object before her. There, on his knees, his head bent forward, his hands clasped, and his lips moving as if in prayer, was her little brother George. He appeared to her exactly in the same position she had seen him in the evening before she was attacked with fever. Nothing could be more exact than his identity. Martha's astonishment at his appearance was far greater than she had experienced on first seeing the phantom of Deborah. With her intense love for her family, she had, of course, frequently thought of the child, and her girlish affection for him was still strong within her. From the number of years which had elapsed since his death, beyond the fact that he had light hair and fine blue eyes, the form of his features had faded from her memory; yet he was before her as perfectly as when she had last seen him. He even wore the same night-dress, and the little night-cap, with

its tiny frill edging, on his head, from under which his hair had escaped and fallen on his shoulders.

Martha continued to gaze at the child's figure, which never ceased its prayers, nor took the slightest notice of her presence. The impression now came over Martha that he was praying for her, and that her sister might be allowed to return to her. She kneeled also, and casting down her eyes, prayed long and fervently. Finding her spirit calmer, she rose from her knees, and saw, not only the child still in the same position, but also her father, mother, and Deborah, all seated in the same places from which they had vanished the night before. She had hardly realised their presence, when, on the other side of her, she saw her sister Charity, regarding her with an expression of the tenderest affection. Martha now remained silently seated on her chair, returning her sister's gaze with one as full of love. Presently—without a word being spoken by either—a current of intelligence seemed to pass between them. Charity informed her sister that she would shortly die, and bade her prepare herself for the change;

that she had watched over her ever since her own death, marking the solicitude she had manifested for her orphan boys; and she assured her that the efforts she had made to bring them up religiously and morally would soon meet with their reward. She reminded her that when she should join her in heaven, they would never more be separated. She bade Martha be of good comfort, and told her that the next evening she would visit her again; and that although invisible, she would in the interim be near her.

This had hardly been understood by Martha when the phantom vanished; but on looking round she found the others still present. None of them seemed to notice her, but all remained in the attitude of prayer—the child in the midst. Martha joined them in their devotions, and thus they remained till the dawn, when the forms, as before, gradually faded away as the morning light became stronger.

During the whole of that day, so profound was Martha's apathy, that she did not stir from the room in which she had passed the night, except to open the wicket for Giles in the morning. She placed on the table the roll he had

brought her, and it remained there untouched till the afternoon, when, making an effort to rouse herself, she ate a portion of it. She then tried to calculate how long the small amount of money she had still left would last; but her mind was very unequal to the task, so she relinquished it. Night came on, and she lighted her candle. She now felt much more interest in her existence, and seated herself in the chair, at the same time fixing her eye on the spot where the child had knelt the evening before. As she continued her gaze, she noticed an indistinct and shadowy outline of its form present itself; and this by degrees became as clearly defined and lifelike as on the previous night. The same phenomena took place with her father and mother and Deborah. Charity was the last to appear, but after a few moments she vanished, the rest remaining till day-light.

It would occupy too much time to go more minutely into Martha's hallucinations. For more than a week she passed every night in the same phantom society; and in the morning there came the same reaction, or rather apathy, in which she remained for the rest of the day. Her stock

of money rapidly decreased, and at last she had only a few pence left. She now quietly resigned herself to her fate. For several days she became gradually weaker, till at length it was with difficulty she could walk from one room to another. The unnatural excitement she experienced in the society of her ghostly companions increased in intensity, while her apathy during the succeeding days was in proportion more profound. The night before the day on which Giles so ineffectually attempted to attract her attention, made a deep impression on her memory. Till then, Charity had never remained with her more than a few minutes, but that night she never quitted her side. She told Martha that the hour of her death was at hand, but that she would remain with her till God took her, that she might conduct her to Paradise. A marked difference took place that night in the behaviour of the other phantoms. They all seemed to regard her with an expression of intense love, not unmixed with joy. Even the countenance of her father lighted up with intelligence, and neither he nor any of the others withdrew their gaze from her for

one moment. The whole night was for Martha one of continuous happiness as she waited for the moment of her dissolution. The day dawned, however, and with the dawn the phantoms, as usual, gradually disappeared.

The next day the reaction was so strong that Martha remained till night in a state of profound lethargy. The continued knocking of Giles was unheard by her, and it was only at the approach of night that she somewhat recovered. That day she took no nourishment whatever, and when she attempted to rise from her chair for the purpose of obtaining a light she sunk back in it, unable from weakness to move. After several efforts she succeeded, but it was with immense difficulty that she returned to her seat. By degrees the unearthly excitement again came on, and one by one the phantoms re-appeared, but now no longer in their accustomed positions. They gathered round her, as if they waited the moment of her death. Although it came not, her weakness greatly increased, and it was with difficulty she could sustain herself erect. Presently she heard an indistinct noise, as of voices singing in the distance, and at the same mo-

ment the countenances of those around her assumed an expression so angelic as to be hardly recognisable. The singing continued, and now she could almost recognise the voices. She felt herself sinking, and she looked on the face of Charity, and found it beaming with joyful expectation. Suddenly all became dark, and she remembered no more. On her return to consciousness, she found herself stretched on the ground. It was broad day, and the light of the sun was appearing through the windows. A loud knocking was heard at the door, but she took no notice of it. As it continued, she made an attempt to rise, but her weakness was so great that she found it quite impossible.

Again she heard the knocking, and again she attempted to rise, though with no more success than before; but by dragging herself along the floor, she reached the front door. By great and repeated efforts she succeeded in raising herself up, and opening the wicket, but the next moment she fainted and fell heavily. It was then that Giles stood up, and looking in saw her prostrate with outstretched arms on the floor. How she had contrived to move from the

door into the centre of the hall, where the shopkeeper and Mr. Keats afterwards found her, she was unable to tell. She remembered nothing of what took place, till she found herself in the apartment taken for her by the doctor, and under the care of Mrs. Mitchell.

CHAPTER III.

EDGAR THORNBURY'S RETURN.

DURING the next month little occurred worthy of notice in our narrative. Martha still remained under the care of Dr. Keats, whose medical ministrations were now reduced solely to watching that no shock, or any great excitement should occur which might bring on a relapse. His caution, however, was almost needless, so quiet and tranquil was the ordinary current of his patient's life. But it must not be imagined that Martha passed her time in calm idleness. On the contrary, all her habitual mental energy, discretion, and cool judgment had returned, which she showed in the admirable manner she occupied herself in the furtherance of useful and charitable works—an employment well adapted to her peculiar temperament. Her

ordinary companion was Fanny Keats, to whom she had now become extremely attached, for although her friendship continued unabated for the doctor's wife, the domestic duties and cares of her young family so absorbed the latter's time, as to preclude the possibility of her being much in Martha's society. Not only had Martha and Fanny Keats entered themselves as teachers in a Sunday school in the immediate neighbourhood, but they also joined a Dorcas society. Martha's favourite occupation, however—that of tending the sick—was still wanting to her, though this at last was placed in her way through the agency of Dr. Keats, and to an extent which gave her full opportunity of exerting herself with all her powers, by introducing her to the resident surgeon of a local dispensary. Through this gentleman's means she made the acquaintance of the sick poor in the neighbourhood, and many an invalid's pillow was smoothed by her kindness, and the patients themselves obtained through her liberality many comforts of which they would otherwise have been destitute. She also became very intimate with the family of the dispensary sur-

geon, and was frequently of great use to them in many ways. He had a sickly wife and several young children, and it was one of Martha's greatest pleasures to assist their mother in teaching and taking care of them, so as to relieve her as much as possible from fatigue. Altogether, a happier state of existence than Martha enjoyed during the first month or six weeks of her stay at Torquay, she could hardly have desired.

About three months after Martha had first taken up her residence at Torquay, she one morning received two letters containing news of great interest to her, though their contents were of a very different description. One was from the Inspector of Police at X——, announcing to her the death of her old servant Deborah. From the letter she gathered that, as the town of X—— was somewhat out of the direct line to London, Deborah had attempted to make her way by cross roads into the great highway, some twenty miles beyond the Cathedral town. About the middle of the day she reached a large village, where she disposed of several articles of linen she had taken with her, no

doubt, as the Inspector hinted, at far less than their value, as one of the men had made inquiries at the little shop where the sale had taken place. She had afterwards continued her road onwards, and in the evening had reached a town of some importance, where she intended to pass the night.

After wandering in the streets for a short time, she perceived a woman wearing the quaker's cap serving in a small general shop. Deborah, without hesitation, appeared to have entered it, and asked the woman if she could recommend her to a respectable lodging for the night, as she strongly objected to seek a bed in a public-house. The sight of the quaker's cap on Deborah seemed to have raised the sympathy of the shopkeeper, who noticing the extreme fatigue marked on the countenance of her visitor, asked her to be seated while she sent a little girl she employed, to inquire whether a poor widow in the neighbourhood, who was accustomed to let her room to decent travellers, had her bed vacant.

During the girl's absence, the shopkeeper attempted to enter into conversation with De-

borah, but with little success, for her natural taciturnity was now increased by the exhaustion she was labouring under, caused by the unwonted fatigues of the day.

In due time the girl returned with the intelligence that the bed was occupied; but that she thought another could be obtained a short distance further on, and that with the permission of her mistress she would show Deborah the way. The shopkeeper readily assented, and Deborah rose from her chair for the purpose of accompanying her guide; but she had hardly attained an erect position, when she staggered for a moment as if suffering from giddiness, and then fell senseless on the floor.

The shopkeeper, now greatly alarmed, rushed round to Deborah's assistance, and with the aid of the girl succeeded in carrying her into a little room at the back of the shop. A surgeon was sent for, who, when he saw her, easily discovered that she was only in a violent fainting fit. With considerable difficulty he succeeded in restoring animation, but even then Deborah was so completely exhausted as to be unable to walk. A short consultation now took place between the

doctor and the shopkeeper as to what should be done with the poor old woman, which ended by the latter offering her the girl's bed, who for the night, she said, should sleep with her.

Deborah was now with considerable difficulty placed in the bed prepared for her, and from which she never rose again. The next morning, although she had recovered the perfect use of her senses, she was too weak to move, and the doctor, on visiting her the day after, found the weakness so much increased that he warned the shopkeeper to prepare for the worst. His prognostications were but too true, for a few days afterwards the poor old woman fell into a deep sleep, from which she never awoke in this world. Her last days were passed in a manner perfectly in keeping with the whole tenor of her life. The shopkeeper, naturally anxious to find out something about the guest who had been thrown on her hospitality in so singular a manner, endeavoured to get from her some particulars of her history. Deborah, however, was most uncommunicative on the subject, and when the hostess offered to write and inform her friends of the condition she was in, Deborah only replied that

she had but one friend in the world, and that she was so poor as to be unable to assist her, and that the knowledge of her (Deborah's) dying state would but aggravate her sorrow without doing any good. She requested the shopkeeper to sell what linen remained in the hand-box she had brought with her, and apply the proceeds as far as they would go to liquidating the expenses she might incur, which, beyond the kind attention given her, were trifling indeed. Deborah, who was perfectly aware that her end was approaching, requested the shopkeeper to read to her from time to time portions of Holy Writ, the intervals being filled up by the dying woman with calm but earnest prayer. Although the proceeds of Deborah's modest wardrobe were far from sufficient to pay for the expenses of her funeral, it is hardly necessary to say that the worthy shopkeeper was no loser by her charity to the poor old woman. Martha, through the Inspector of Police, liberally compensated her for the trouble and expense she had been put to, and on more than one occasion afterwards was able to be of considerable service to her.

The other letter Martha received was from

her brother Edgar Thornbury. In it he informed her that he and his wife had safely arrived in England, and that as soon as they had cleared their luggage from the Custom-house, they intended paying her a visit, but that they would write again to tell her the day she might expect them.

The letter from the Police Inspector caused Martha great sorrow, but after the first burst of grief was over, this was somewhat modified by the intelligence contained in the one from her brother; and when in the course of the week she received a second letter from him, informing her that she might expect his wife and himself the following day, she had sufficiently regained her spirits to hide from him all traces of her recent sorrow.

The meeting between the brother and sister, as may naturally be supposed, was a most affectionate one. Martha found Edgar not much changed in his appearance, although his face was somewhat bronzed by his many years' sojourn in India. Mrs. Thornbury, his wife, was a delicate-looking woman, but appeared very amiable, and expressed great satisfaction at

meeting Martha, of whom she had heard her husband speak in terms of great affection. But Martha's cup of happiness was not yet full. Not only did her brother inform her that it was his intention for the future to reside in England, and gradually resign his share in the business to his nephews, but that Walter the elder would shortly leave India to take permanent charge of the English branch, under his (Edgar's) superintendence, till he was able to manage it himself. He concluded by telling Martha that it was his intention to leave it entirely in the hands of his nephews, when he should find they had sufficient experience in business to take the responsibility of conducting it themselves. Martha, of course, was delighted at the intelligence, for the elder nephew had always been an especial pet of hers—possibly more from the strong resemblance he bore in feature to her sister Charity than for any other reason, both of the lads being equally fond of her, and equally deserving of her love.

Although Dr. Keats and his wife, with their niece Fanny, were introduced to Mr. and Mrs. Thornbury, they soon afterwards left the room, so as to be no hindrance to the conversation on

family matters which would be likely to arise between the brother and sister, and which lasted for some hours without any intermission. Scarcely a subject which had occurred since Martha and Edgar parted long years since was left untouched. Although Martha spoke with great modesty of her behaviour to her aged father and mother, as well as to her beloved sister Charity and her children, Edgar Thornbury was far more demonstrative.

"Marguerite, my dear," he said to his wife, "you must not take Martha's merits at her own valuation, or you will do her a great injustice. A better daughter and sister or a kinder friend never existed. But it would be impossible for you to appreciate her justly without knowing the trials she has gone through, and her admirable unselfish behaviour under trying circumstances. But no matter, Martha," he continued, addressing his sister, "it shall be no fault of mine if a brighter future is not in store for you. God has now placed ample means at my disposal, and I should be despicable indeed if I omitted any opportunity in my power to recompense you for the privations and sufferings you have endured."

The compliments paid by her brother had the effect of bringing tears into Martha's eyes. Mrs. Thornbury perceived them, and with feminine tact turned the conversation on other subjects, so as to give Martha an opportunity of recovering herself. As Martha had already told her brother of Deborah's death in her answer to his first letter, neither now touched on the subject, although they frequently reverted to it afterwards. The conversation continued till it was time for the Thornburys to return to their hotel to dinner, when Edgar insisted on Martha's accompanying them.

"By-the-by, Martha," he continued, "who is that pretty girl you introduced us to?"

Martha in reply told him that she was the daughter of one of the canons at X——, who had accompanied her to Torquay, partly on a visit to her aunt, and partly as a companion to herself; and she concluded by complimenting Fanny Keats and her family highly for the kindness and attention they had invariably shown her since she had first made their acquaintance. Edgar immediately included Fanny in his invitation, and a few min-

utes afterwards they were on their way to the hotel.

The dinner passed off in a most agreeable manner to all parties, though possibly this might to a certain extent have been due to the presence of the waiters in the room, precluding the conversation from turning too much on family matters, in which it is more than probable both Martha and her brother might have indulged. Even Fanny Keats, who at first was somewhat nervous in the presence of the newly-arrived nabob, warmed up and talked fluently enough with his wife on the domestic arrangements, parties, balls, and other amusements of the European residents in India. On one subject of conversation which arose, she spoke, however, not a word, although she listened most attentively, pretending the while to be deeply occupied with the beauty of the flowers which formed the centre ornament of the table—it was when Edgar Thornbury was expatiating on the conduct of his two nephews. In this Martha, by continually asking questions concerning them, encouraged him to proceed, and the result was that, from the time dessert was placed on the

table till the company rose from it, little else was spoken of. It was at last, however, put a stop to by Mrs. Thornbury—possibly acting a part previously determined on with her husband —proposing to Fanny that, as the evening was mild and genial, they should take a stroll by the seashore, adding that by so doing they would allow her husband and his sister to continue their conversation together on family matters. Fanny readily agreed; and Martha was left alone with her brother, to continue their conversation at leisure.

As soon as Mrs. Thornbury and Fanny were gone Martha asked Edgar where he intended to reside in England.

"How can you ask such a question, Martha?" he replied. "At the Red House, to be sure. As a residence I would not change it for the most splendid palace in the land. Possibly you may doubt me, but I mean what I say. The morning I left home to start for Calcutta, just before passing the lodge gates, I turned round in the chaise to have one last look at the old place. For a moment the idea came over me that I might never see it again; but this soon vanished, and a

settled conviction arose in my mind that I should return to it once more. Martha," he continued, abruptly changing the conversation, " are you a believer in mesmerism, spiritualism, clairvoyance, or whatever this new-found quackery or science may be called?"

" Certainly not, dear," was Martha's reply. " Why do you ask?"

" Because, although I was always able, during my voyage to India, and long after my arrival, to conjure up the vision of the Red House, you were the only personage connected with it who recurred to my mind at the same moment. And (but of course it is all nonsense) as I received the news of each successive death of the different members of my family, the idea that you it was foredoomed would be the only member of it alive at my return, was latent in me from the first time my thoughts reverted to the old place after I had quitted it. This again was the more remarkable, for whenever I thought about it, Charity was never with you; and I loved her, Martha, quite as much as I did you."

" I am afraid, Edgar, you will find the whole

place dreadfully out of repair," said Martha. "I suppose you have not seen it yet?"

"No, I have not; but I intend doing so after I leave here. I shall remain a few days in London to make arrangements for taking a ready furnished house while the Red House is under repair."

Her brother's determination to reside in the Red House gave Martha great satisfaction, and she expressed it warmly, complimenting him on his affection for the old place, which was as dear to her, notwithstanding all the misery she had suffered in it, as it was to Edgar.

"But now, Martha," said her brother, "as I have with great candour explained to you my contemplated proccedings, and answered all your questions with a truthfulness which could not have been surpassed, had I been a Roman Catholic, and you my father confessor, would it be an act of indiscretion on my part if I ask you in return what may be your plans for the future?"

"My dear brother, what plans can I have?" she replied. "I spent my last shilling before I was taken ill, and had it not been for your

liberality I might now be dead, or in the poor-house."

"But you received the money I sent, did you not?" asked Edgar.

"Certainly, dear, and I have one hundred and fifty pounds of it left in the banker's hands out of the two hundred I received. I should have had more, but I have had to pay the reward I offered to the Inspector of Police at X——, as well as remunerate the good woman who was so kind to Deborah in her last illness."

"As usual, Martha, you have acted most economically, but you are in error as to the amount of your assets. In making up your balance sheet," he continued, taking a pocket-book from a little writing-case he had brought with him, and extracting from it two stock receipts for a thousand pounds each; "you must add these sums, or if you called yourself an insolvent you would make but a poor appearance before the commissioner. You have now enough for pocket money and dress, and your house rent and board will cost you nothing."

"Oh! Edgar," said Martha, overwhelmed at her brother's liberality, "this is too much."

"Not at all, Martha; but now it must be understood that you live with us. I will let you have no will of your own on the subject; I must insist on you, as a good sister, submitting to mine. The old house will seem unlike itself without you, and you must reside with me in it. Now, let me have no objections," he continued, noticing she was about to speak; "remember, I have resided so long in the East, that I have imbibed some of the despotic notions prevalent there, and I will be disobeyed by no one under my care. I have, you know, a right to control you, and it is your duty to obey me."

"But, Edgar, what will your wife say to an arrangement of the kind?" asked Martha. "Remember she ought also to be consulted. For my own part, nothing in the world could add more to my happiness than to live with you; but your wife might consider my presence an intrusion."

"Martha," said Edgar, with mock gravity in his tone and countenance, "you both surprise and grieve me with your duplicity. Tell the truth, if you please, unpleasant as it may be, but you ought not to prevaricate."

"I don't understand you, Edgar," said Martha, who, being somewhat dull at perceiving a joke, imagined her brother to be in earnest.

"But I understand you, Martha," said Edgar, "and perfectly well, too. You think that the two thousand pounds you have received would make a very nice little dowry for you, and that now you may marry that little red-haired Welsh curate for whom you conceived so fatal a passion in days long gone by. It does your constancy great credit, I must admit, Martha. I have no doubt he has remained single, too, out of affection for you. Is it not so?"

"How can you talk such nonsense, Edgar," said Martha, smiling in spite of herself. "Now, do speak seriously, dear. I am afraid Marguerite might not approve of my residing at the Red House, or I need not say I would do so with pleasure."

"You do not know Marguerite, or you would not say so," said Edgar. "So far from there being any likelihood of a disagreement between you, I am sure you would both be excellent friends. However, to make your mind easy on the subject, I may say that I have already

spoken to her about it, and she requested me to inform you that an arrangement of the kind would give her the greatest pleasure; so you may consider it as settled. In the meantime, till all is prepared for you at the Red House, I would advise you to remain quietly here with the doctor."

Martha expressed her willingness to remain under the doctor's care till everything was in readiness at the Red House, and the conversation on the subject closed.

The next morning Edgar Thornbury mentioned to the doctor the conversation he had had with Martha the previous evening. To his inquiry, however, whether Dr. Keats could continue to accommodate her in his own house, he received a negative reply.

"I would willingly do so," said the doctor, "but as you may perceive my house is none of the largest, and my family is almost too numerous for it at present. Pray believe me, that is my only objection. Not merely is your sister's case one of great interest to me, but from what I have seen of her I have conceived a great respect for her. Nor am I alone in my opinion,

my wife esteems her quite as highly as I do, and my children entertain for her a sincere affection. I also believe it would tend more to her own comfort if she had an apartment to herself. I know of one facing the sea, one which would suit her admirably, and as I have a patient already in the same house, I could keep my eye on her without intruding my professional services, unless they should be absolutely required. But this, I am happy to state, I consider a somewhat remote contingency, as her health in my opinion is completely re-established, though I need hardly say I sincerely hope she will keep up her amicable relations with my family, for it is want of space in my house, and no other reason, which induces me to suggest her removal."

"I am perfectly ready to admit the strength of your argument, and I will persuade her to adopt your suggestion," said Edgar. "At the same time I think she would be very sorry to lose the society of your niece. Have you any objection to allow Miss Keats to remain with her?"

"Not the slightest," said the doctor. "I think

such an arrangement would be an excellent one for your sister in every respect. All I am afraid of is, that if alone she might feel dull, and the fits of melancholy under which she occasionally suffered on her arrival might return. Fanny has excellent spirits, and is moreover a thoroughly good girl, and will make your sister a very suitable companion."

Martha readily fell in with the doctor's views; the rooms were engaged the same day, and on the morrow Edgar Thornbury had the satisfaction of seeing his sister and her companion completely installed in them, where they were to remain under the doctor's charge till the repairs and alterations at the Red House were fully completed.

Before leaving Torquay, Edgar Thornbury had a long consultation with the doctor on his sister's health. Edgar then heard, for the first time, of the singular hallucinations under which Martha had laboured before leaving the Red House. The news caused him considerable uneasiness, and he inquired whether Martha had any tendency to insanity.

"None whatever," said Dr. Keats. "I have

not the slightest suspicion of anything of that kind."

"But do you not think it possible," said Edgar, "that if my sister returned to the same house it might bring on another attack?"

"Candidly," said the doctor, after a few moments reflection, "I am not without some anxiety about that; more especially if she were to return immediately. In the first place, what arrangements do you intend making for her reception?"

"Simply that she will live with us as one of the family," said Edgar; "and you may rest perfectly assured that I will do everything in my power that I think may conduce to her comfort and welfare. If you consider the plan at all practicable, tell me how you would suggest it should be carried out, and I will implicitly obey you."

"Do you intend making any alterations in the premises?" inquired the doctor.

"I propose putting the place in thorough repair," said Edgar; "beyond that, I hardly know what I shall do. I have not yet visited the Red House, but I am told it is in a most

dilapidated condition, and with all the alterations I have already determined on making, it will probably take more than twelve months to put it in order. But why do you ask the question?"

"Because I hold that the greater the change you make in it, the less would be the danger of a relapse. Singular as it may appear, I consider that the different objects by which your sister was surrounded, during her solitary abode at the Red House, were, to a considerable extent, the cause of her delusions."

"How so?"

"By the different articles of furniture acting as outlines for her mind to fill up the phantoms which appeared in them. This is a common psychological phenomenon, and we are all capable of exhibiting it in a greater or less degree. For example," he said, pointing to a large picture of a landscape on the wall, "look at that picture steadily for a minute. Now, if I were to take it away, and place in its stead a slight outline of the various objects—no matter how vaguely they might be drawn—your memory would be able to fill up the details of the picture. The

different objects by which your sister was surrounded at the Red House acted in the same manner upon her excited brain, without the slightest particle of insanity being connected with it. Without them it is more than probable the hallucination would never have assumed the form it did. It was owing to the open Bible and the chair that the phantom of the old servant was conjured up. The phantom of her father and mother are accounted for in the same way. The sight of the child's cot accidentally coming under her observation, brought to her mind her little brother, and her heated imagination did the rest. Her sister Charity was brought before her by passing the open door of her bedroom, and her excited brain, acting on her feeble bodily health, afterwards painted the apparition of her sister by her side. The vanishing of the phantoms when she addressed her sister is also easily accounted for; the realistic sound of her own voice dispelling the unreal visitors by whom she was surrounded. As her bodily strength diminished, the phantoms assumed more and more the appearance of reality. Of course I need hardly say

that the voices of the angels she thought she heard when she imagined herself expiring arose simply from the blood rushing into her ears before fainting. Now, if you take my advice, you will not merely repair and redecorate the house, but you will change every piece of furniture in it besides. If you do that, it is possible—nay, I may say certain—no injurious effects will ensue when she takes up her residence with you, especially as you say it would be twelve months before you would be prepared to receive her; and if you leave her here with me, I will do all I can to prevent the possibility of a relapse, when she returns home."

"But does my sister admit that all she saw was an hallucination?" inquired Edgar Thornbury.

"Certainly," said the doctor. "The very failure of the chief conclusion she had arrived at —that she was expiring—has taught her the absurdity, or at any rate, the unlikelihood of the whole affair."

"Well, doctor, I will do everything that you advise," said Edgar Thornbury. "Not a particle of its present furniture shall remain in the house, and even the paper in every room shall be

changed; besides any further suggestion that may present itself to you shall be carried out, if you will inform me of it. I am very fond of my poor sister, and her residing with me again will give me great pleasure."

After a week's stay in Torquay, Edgar Thornbury and his wife returned to London, leaving Martha and Fanny Keats quietly settled in their new lodgings. On parting with her brother, Martha begged him not to forget to forward her the letters from her two nephews which he had omitted to bring with him when he left London. He faithfully promised he would do so, and two days afterwards Mrs. Thornbury sent them to her with a letter from herself. Martha first read those from her nephews. The younger one's contained merely an account of his doings since he had last written, and subjects generally connected with family matters, with all of which the reader is already acquainted. The other, from Walter, the elder—and Martha's especial favourite—was much longer, and written in a far more confidential manner. In it he expatiated at great length on the joy he felt at visiting England, and particularly at again meet-

ing his aunt. "I have no doubt," he said, "my uncle has already told you that it is not his intention that I should again return to India, but be employed in the branch house about to be established in London. You can little imagine my satisfaction at the arrangement, for, between ourselves, I detest India, although I should not like my uncle to know it. After all the kindness he has shewn me, he might consider it ungrateful on my part, and I would not for the world offend him. Still my anxious wish is to remain in England, and there to marry and settle. By-the-bye, aunt, I wish you would look out for a nice wife for me, as I am sure I could be happy with anyone you might select."

Martha, who had been reading the letters from her nephews aloud to Fanny Keats, here burst into a fit of laughter.

"Upon my word," she said, "he has shown but little tact in selecting a prim old maid like myself for a commission of the kind."

As she said this she mechanically raised her eyes from the letter, and noticed that a deep blush suffused Fanny's face, which the poor girl was evidently endeavouring to suppress, there-

by causing it to become still more apparent. Martha immediately withdrew her eyes from her companion, and with an almost imperceptible smile on her face, continued her letter, which, however, contained nothing further worthy of quoting. The one from Mrs. Thornbury contained many kind expressions of the pleasure she had felt in forming Martha's acquaintance, and her hope that nothing would ever occur to disturb the sincere affection which she felt persuaded existed between them; and she also informed her that she had just despatched by train a little present of which she begged her acceptance, and another which she requested Martha to give to Miss Keats.

In the course of the day a case arrived, which on being opened was found to contain a valuable cashmere shawl for Martha, and a carved ivory work-box for Fanny.

CHAPTER IV.

WALTER MORECOMBE ARRIVES IN ENGLAND.

IT is almost needless to say that Mrs. Thornbury's presents were received with great satisfaction both by Martha and Fanny Keats, although their pleasure arose from somewhat different causes. Fanny estimated hers by its intrinsic worth, while Martha, whose shawl might have cost several hundred pounds, valued hers almost entirely from the kind feeling Mrs. Thornbury had shown in the gift. Much as Fanny was pleased with her work-box, she could not help glancing with intense admiration at the cashmere shawl of which, young as she was, she well knew the value, and the charms it possessed in the eyes of all lady observers.

After having placed the shawl *secundum artem* on Martha's shoulders, she stood at a short distance to admire it at her leisure, and the

longer her gaze continued the greater did its beauty appear.

"Why, my dear Miss Thornbury," she said at last, "with that shawl you will be the admiration of the whole town. Every lady in it will envy you."

"I suspect, Fanny," said Martha, laughing, "many more will envy you without the shawl than me with it. To tell you the truth, I personally care but very little about it otherwise than as a gift from my sister-in-law. But now," she continued, taking it from her shoulders, "I shall lock it up carefully among my other valuables till an occasion shall present itself for me to wear it."

"But you really don't mean to say," said Fanny, "that you are going to lock up a shawl of that kind now you have it. Do let me put it on you again, and we will go for a walk. If it will give no pleasure to you it will to me, to notice the admiring glances every person we meet will cast on it. Let us first go to my uncle's and show it to Mrs. Keats, and we will take two of the children out for a walk with us. You shall go on before with one, and I will follow at a

little distance with the other, so that I may be able to hear the remarks made by people after they have passed you. Now, pray do as I ask you."

Whether Fanny had contrived to inoculate Martha with some of her own admiration for the shawl, or whether to oblige her friend, it is impossible to say, but Martha consented to the arrangement. After having called at Dr. Keats' house, where the shawl received its due share of admiration, they took two of the children out for a walk, Martha with one child being in advance, while Fanny, leading the other, followed at a short distance. Plentiful indeed were the remarks on the shawl which Fanny gathered during their walk, all of which she detailed to Martha when they arrived at home. Here, however, the public exhibition of the cashmere shawl ceased, for in spite of Fanny's entreaties to the contrary, Martha locked it up carefully till she had an opportunity, as she said, of wearing it upon some public occasion, but on what occasion that might probably be she said nothing.

For the next four months Martha and Fanny

Keats remained quietly in their lodgings at Torquay. In the meantime Edgar Thornbury and his wife had taken a ready furnished house in London, the former spending a great portion of his time at X——, superintending the repairs and alterations which were going on at the Red House.

On visiting the place he found that Martha had by no means over-stated the fearful condition of dilapidation it was in. In fact, as his architect observed, it would have cost but little more to build a modern house of equal size. Still Edgar was so much attached to the home of his ancestors, that he positively refused to listen to the architect's suggestion. Plans and estimates were drawn up for the works to be effected, and their probable cost, and a host of bricklayers, joiners, plumbers, carpenters, and other handicrafts, took possession of the place; yet so much had to be done that Edgar was informed he would not be able to inhabit the house till at least six months had expired from the commencement of the alterations.

Neither Edgar nor his wife again visited Torquay, but a continued correspondence was kept

up between Martha and themselves. Mrs. Thornbury, who rarely accompanied her husband in his visits to the Red House, invited Martha and Fanny Keats to spend some time with her in London, but upon consideration Martha declined the offer, partly from a dislike she had to change of place, and partly from the advice of Dr. Keats, who, although he admitted his patient's health to be completely restored, thought it would be far safer for her to remain quietly in Torquay, than mix in the bustle and excitement of London.

On one subject neither Mr. nor Mrs. Thornbury ever touched in any but the vaguest manner in their letters to Martha, and this was the Red House and the alterations which had taken place in it. This reticence on their part, it should be understood, was not caused by any wish to conceal what was going on, but they acted solely on the advice of Dr. Keats, who considered it might be injudicious to attract Martha's thoughts more than could be helped, to anything connected with the terrible scenes she imagined she had witnessed in it.

About five months after Martha had taken up

her residence at Torquay, her nephew, Walter Morecombe (for he still bore the name of his unworthy father) arrived in England, and after a short stay in London with Mr. and Mrs. Thornbury, he started off to visit his aunt. Martha, as may naturally be supposed, was delighted to see him. Of course she found him much changed since they had parted. He had then left a tall, thin, stripling of a lad, and had now returned to her a fine grown, strong, powerful, well-made, and remarkably handsome young man. Although when a boy he was somewhat bashful and awkward, he was now, on the contrary, self-possessed and courteous. Martha was vastly pleased with him, and introduced him with evident pride to her friends, who received him with great cordiality. All spoke of his appearance and manners in terms of high commendation, with the exception of Fanny Keats, who showed much reserve on the subject, and this was the more remarkable as when talking with Martha she was accustomed to use great candour in the remarks she made on the merits and defects of her acquaintance. The young fellow on his part seemed much struck with Fanny, and with

good reason, for she was not only a very lovely and attractive girl, but combined with it an amiable expression of countenance, and that "most excellent thing in woman—a mild, soft voice," which must have presented powerful attractions to a young fellow who for so many years had been comparatively deprived of the charms of English female society.

Walter had hardly been a week in Torquay before it became evident, not only to the watchful eye of the old maid, but to the dwellers in the house as well, that Fanny Keats had made a great impression on his heart. Although he paid great attention and respect to his aunt, she could easily perceive he was far more silent and taciturn when Fanny was absent than when she was present. A change also had come over the behaviour of the young girl, less obvious to the casual observer, it is true, than that which had taken place in Walter Thornbury. Instead of the comparative silence and reserve she had at first maintained in his presence, she had now regained the full use of her tongue, and conversed with him without more diffidence than she would have shown in the

presence of any other gentleman with whom she was intimate; while she had become far more silent than formerly in Martha's society. Again, she had been of late fastidiously particular in her dress—neat as she naturally was—studying with great care what articles were most becoming to her, what colours best suited her complexion, and other similar important matters. All this Martha noticed with great satisfaction, and although she took no steps to encourage the affection she saw springing up between her nephew and Fanny, she put no impediment in the way of their meeting; and as Walter visited his aunt every morning, and seldom left her before night, he had ample opportunity of being in Fanny's society without any adventitious assistance on the part of any one.

In justice to Martha, it is necessary to say a few words in defence—or rather explanation—of her conduct. At first sight it may appear she was hardly justified in allowing an intimacy of the kind to spring up between a young girl under her protection and Walter Morecombe, without the permission or knowledge of their

natural guardians. But on a little consideration it will appear she was hardly to blame in the matter. In the first place, she had determined that as soon as she was convinced an affection existed between the young people, not to allow it to proceed so far without the knowledge of Fanny's parents, as that it might not be broken off should it be considered desirable to do so. She had moreover drawn the attention of the doctor's wife (with whom she was on terms of great intimacy) to the admiration Walter had for her niece; and she did this under the full persuasion that it would soon reach the ears of Fanny's mother, a constant correspondence being kept up between the doctor's family in Torquay, and that of the Rev. Mr. Keats in X——.

With regard to Walter, Martha considered herself under no subjection whatever. True, he was employed by his uncle, and his worldly prospects greatly depended on him; and although Martha would have been shocked at the idea of doing anything which might loosen the tie between them, still she looked upon herself as the sole natural guardian of Walter More-

combe. And cruel indeed would have been those who attempted to dispute her title. To her, and her alone, was Walter indebted in his boyhood, not solely for board, clothing and instruction, but almost for life itself. It would hardly be possible to imagine two more destitute children than Walter and his brother, when, the morning after their mother's funeral, they nestled up to Martha, as if relying on her and her alone to afford them protection and shelter in the pitiless world into which they were thrown in so helpless a condition. And admirably did she reply to their mute appeal, not only supplying the place of their mother with a solicitude no mother could have surpassed, but she carried on her self-imposed duties till she had deprived herself of every farthing she had in the world, considering herself the while fully compensated for the care and expense she had bestowed upon them, by the remembrance that she had thereby secured for them a career by which they might become honourable members of society. But Martha still held that more remained to be done. She knew perfectly well how much the happiness and welfare of a man

depended on his being united to a good wife. She conscientiously believed that it would be impossible for Walter to find one more likely to make him happy than Fanny Keats, whose character she had carefully studied, and she could hardly be blamed in indirectly encouraging an intimacy which might ultimately tend to the lasting happiness of one she loved as her own child.

Although Walter and Fanny had many opportunities of meeting and becoming well acquainted with each other, for some time nothing seemed to be definitely arrived at. One morning, however, when Martha entered the drawing-room she found her nephew and Fanny each seated on the sofa at the greatest possible distance one from the other, and both looking remarkably sheepish and confused. As soon as she entered, they rose from their seats, and with badly simulated pleasure on their faces, hoped she had enjoyed her walk, and had not fatigued herself—possibly wishing at the time she had continued it a little longer, even at the risk of increasing her fatigue. Notwithstanding their efforts, Martha had shrewdness enough to

perceive that before her entrance they had been sitting in very close proximity to each other, and that she had disturbed them. She made no remark, however, but endeavoured to allow them to regain their self-possession by commencing a conversation on some indifferent subject. Her good intentions were of no avail, for they remained confused and silent. It was an embarrassing position for all parties. Although the young people made some attempt to keep up the conversation they did not succeed, while Martha felt that they both wished her away, and she would willingly have obliged them had she not considered that quitting the room at that moment was not altogether consistent with the rules of propriety.

This state of things was continued until luncheon was brought in. When it was over, and the things removed from the table, Martha placed her writing case upon it, and made preparations for beginning a letter, her nephew, who had been silent for some time, watching her attentively the while. Just as Martha had dipped her pen in the ink, preparatory to commencing her letter, Walter suddenly rose from his chair, and advancing towards her said:

"If you are not too tired, aunt, I wish you would take a walk with me."

"I was just on the point of writing a letter to your uncle, my dear; can you wait till I have finished it?"

"I would rather you came at once, aunt," said Walter, kissing her on the forehead.

Martha, who thus implored, could have refused him nothing within the limits of half her fortune, replied, "Certainly, my dear, if you wish it;" and then rising from her seat and closing her writing case, continued, "Will you not come with us, Fanny?"

Fanny Keats, who appeared to have intuitively taken her cue from her lover, pleaded a headache as an excuse for remaining at home, utterly ignoring Martha's suggestion that a walk in the country might do her good. At first Fanny's refusal somewhat puzzled Martha, but after a moment's reflection the idea struck her, that perhaps her nephew wished to speak with her alone on some subject; and as the only one which presented itself to her imagination was connected with himself and Fanny, the latter's proposition to remain at home gave her more

pleasure than surprise. During their walk, Martha had full proof that she had correctly guessed the reason for her nephew wishing to go out with her alone. For some time after they had left the house, he continued remarkably thoughtful and silent; but when they had quitted the town, he at last broke out with, "I suspect, aunt, you thought I looked very foolish when you came into the drawing-room this morning."

"I did not remark anything of the kind," said Martha, adding another to the catalogue of her sins.

"I feel keenly that I did, at all events," he said.

"Why so?"

Here Walter remained silent for some moments, as if summoning up his courage to say something against his inclination, and then with an evident effort said:

"Well, to tell you the truth, aunt, I had been that moment proposing to Fanny Keats."

"You don't say so!" said Martha, with difficulty repressing a laugh.

"It's a fact, I assure you."

"And what may Fanny have said to you in reply?" inquired Martha.

"Well, between ourselves she accepted me, subject to the approval of her father and mother."

"Very proper indeed," said Martha; "I highly approve of her behaviour."

"Yes, but Fanny objects to write to them on the subject."

"Quite right again," said Martha. "But why don't you write to them yourself?"

"Well, aunt, I don't know how to word the letter; would you do it for me?"

"Certainly not," said Martha; "why, what a foolish fellow you are to be afraid of doing it yourself."

"But you know, aunt, it's a very different thing making an offer to Fanny or to her father. However, the sooner it's done the sooner it will be over, so I will write by to-night's post. What do you think he will say to my proposition?"

"Well, at first he may make some difficulty, as you are a stranger to him; but when he comes to know you as well as I do, I do not think you will meet with much opposition."

"I am afraid, aunt, your good opinion of me may induce you to take a somewhat too sanguine

view of the matter. What sort of a man do you say her father is?"

"As I told you before, he is a very kind and amiable man. I am sure you will like both him and his wife."

"Very well, aunt, I will write then by this night's post. I suppose I may refer to you for my character."

"You may, with every certainty of receiving a good one, my dear. I will not disguise from you, that if you marry Fanny Keats it will give me great pleasure. She is just the girl your poor mother would have chosen for you."

"And now, aunt," said Walter, "I want you to do me a great favour."

"What may it be?" inquired Martha. "I must know that before I promise to grant it."

"I want you to write to my uncle, telling him all about it."

"And why cannot you do so yourself?"

"Oh, I don't know, aunt. It looks so foolish for one man to write to another about love affairs, and things of that kind; especially to such a man as my uncle. Now be a good soul and write for me."

Martha promised to write to her brother the next day, but Walter insisted she should do so by that night's post, so that both letters might be received at the same time, and thus he—as he expressed it—the sooner be put out of his misery. Martha said she would do as he wished; and after a little more conversation on the same subject, the aunt and nephew returned home.

As soon as Martha had entered the house she sent for her future niece into the bedroom. Fanny, who anticipated the object for which she was wanted, looked rather foolish when she entered, but the cordial embrace she received soon set her completely at her ease. Martha expressed to her the great satisfaction she felt at the intelligence that a marriage was contemplated between her and Walter, and how pleased she should be if it took place, as from what she knew of both of them she considered they were admirably suited for each other. Martha's kind behaviour soon set Fanny's tongue at liberty, and they remained talking together, building castles in the air, and drawing out plans for the future, till they were summoned to dinner.

Both replies, as Walter had anticipated, ar-

rived by return of post. The one from Mr. Keats, as being that of the most importance, he naturally opened first. In it Mr. Keats informed him that without a full investigation of his prospects and capability of maintaining a wife and family (as he had but little to give his daughter), as well as not having his personal acquaintance, he must for the present decline the offer Walter had made for Fanny's hand. At the same time he requested that his letter should not be taken as a definite refusal. If all things turned out as he had been led to suppose, it was still possible he might give his consent to the match. He admitted that in conversation with Mr. Thornbury, whose acquaintance he had lately made, he had incidentally spoken in terms of great admiration of both his nephews. Mr. Keats also said that another difficulty had to be cleared up. Before he could entertain the question he must be assured that his daughter would not have to leave England and reside in India. He was, he said, tenderly attached to his children, and no offer his daughter might receive, however flattering, should induce him to part with her if there was a probability of her leav-

ing England to reside permanently abroad. He further told Walter that he should much like to make his acquaintance, and the next time Mr. Thornbury visited X—— he hoped he would accompany him, and that then they could go deeper into the subject than it was possible to do by any amount of correspondence. The letter concluded by an expression of great good-feeling towards Walter, and an admission of pleasure at the compliment he had paid to his daughter.

Edgar Thornbury's letter to his nephew was short and to the point. He congratulated him on the choice he had made. What he had seen of the young lady during his stay in Torquay had pleased him exceedingly; and he had since made the acquaintance of her father and family, for all of whom he had conceived a high respect. He concluded by telling Walter that the match would have his full approbation, and that he would take an early opportunity of addressing the Rev. Mr. Keats on the subject, telling him the pleasure it would give him if his nephew's offer were accepted.

After the two letters had been read, a lengthened conversation ensued between Martha, her

nephew, and Fanny Keats. Walter appeared somewhat inclined to take a desponding view of the matter. Although he was much pleased with the kind manner his uncle had received the intelligence of his offer to Fanny Keats, he was far from being content with her father, and was particularly annoyed with that paragraph in his letter alluding to pecuniary affairs, and his ability to maintain a wife and family. This, he told Martha, he considered rather mercenary on the part of Mr. Keats.

"My dear Walter," said Martha, "I don't see what right you have to come to any conclusion of the kind. I think, on the contrary, you ought to respect him the more for the very precaution he is taking for his daughter's happiness."

"I don't see that at all," said Walter. "It is not to be supposed that I have not sufficient foresight in a matter of the kind, or that I should be likely to place Fanny in any position where she would not be able to live, not only in comfort, but in a manner consistent with her position as a lady."

"But, Walter, you must remember a young man in love is not generally considered the best

judge in such matters. Now, look at it coolly. Have you any idea what your uncle will do for you—for I very much suspect you have no capital of your own?"

"No, I have not," said Walter, "I admit. But with the income I shall receive in the office my uncle is about establishing in London I have no doubt I shall be able to maintain a house and family in great respectability."

"What salary does your uncle propose allowing you?" said Martha.

Here Walter merely shrugged his shoulders, and gave no answer.

"But, my dear Walter," said his auut, "don't get impatient on the subject. Has he not spoken to you about it?"

"No, aunt, he has not; but I have no doubt he will give me a very liberal salary."

"There, now, my dear," said Martha, "you see you are not even aware of the amount of salary you are to receive from your uncle, and yet you are angry with Mr. Keats for taking a more common-sense view of the matter. That Fanny will be a good manager I have no doubt; but it would be difficult for her to decide on any

plan of management until she is able to say what money will be placed at her disposal."

"Do you think I had better write to my uncle on the subject?"

"No," replied Martha, "I would not advise you to do so. You had much better remain quiet till you return to London, and then hear what he says in the matter. Of this you may be certain—and I have had very good proof of it—that my brother is very liberal to those he likes; and I know he has a great regard for you. I am fully convinced that when you meet he will tell you what he intends doing for you, and then if you afterwards accompany him to X—— you will be able to lay before Mr. Keats such a statement of your plans and prospects as will allow him to form a decision on the subject. I have no fear myself that all will end well, and so far from taking the view that you do, I should consider the letter from Mr. Keats as encouraging in the extreme."

Fanny, of course, had taken but little part in the conversation, although there was no difficulty in perceiving that her attention had been well riveted on the subject under discussion;

and without making any remark on the conclusion Martha had arrived at respecting the encouraging tone of the letter, she evidently fully concurred in it.

By the next morning all Walter's anxiety on the subject seemed to have vanished, and he was as sanguine for the future as any lover could be. Dr. Keats and his family also contributed in allaying uneasy doubts on his part, for they received him with the warm welcome which would naturally be offered to a person whom they respected, and who was about to become a member of the family. Through the doctor's family the news of the engagement became known to others, and in a very short time Walter and Fanny were looked upon as a regularly affianced couple.

Martha was now in her glory. In the first place, she felt that in bringing about the match between her sister's son and a good and amiable girl, she had been fulfilling a portion of the duty she took upon herself. In the second place, she had the occupation so dear to old maids —that of superintending an interesting love affair. She now employed her time in what is

usually termed "playing propriety," which she did to perfection. She allowed the young couple to be very frequently out of ear-shot, but comparatively rarely out of sight. She accompanied them in their walks, but generally on these occasions kept at a considerable distance in the rear, making most absurd excuses of fatigue, or that she found a difficulty in walking as fast as they did. The excuses—absurd as they might be—were always admitted (though with expressions of regret) by the lovers.

It had been arranged that Walter should remain in Torquay till his uncle was prepared to take his next journey to X——, when he should accompany him. Mr. Thornbury had been, however, unexpectedly detained in town for some weeks, to Walter's great satisfaction, for a happier time than he passed during the interval in Torquay it would be difficult to imagine.

At last Walter received an order from his uncle to join him the next morning, news which gave him but slight satisfaction, for to say the truth he somewhat dreaded his interview with Mr. Keats. However, there was no alternative

for him. The evening passed in a very sad manner for the young couple, and the sadness was even more apparent the next morning, previous to Walter quitting the house. During breakfast the conversation was carried on much in the same tone as is used at funerals before the procession quits the house to proceed to the cemetery. In fact, had it not been for the broad glare of the sun which shone through the windows, and the coloured dresses of those in the room, it might almost have been thought that a funeral was in anticipation instead of a step in advance towards the completion of a happy marriage.

When the time arrived for Walter's departure, poor Martha became singularly troubled in her mind on a point of propriety—ought she to quit the room when her nephew and Fanny were taking leave of each other, or should she remain? At last she adopted a medium course. After kissing Walter affectionately, and bidding him good-bye, she went to the window, saying she would watch him as he went so as to see the last of him; and she then looked earnestly at nothing in the street, holding herself as erect

and immovable as a statue, and conscientiously endeavouring to close her ears to the murmured conversation which for a few moments passed between the lovers. In spite, however, of all her conscientious endeavours, she did not fully succeed. Although she could with truth state she had not understood a word of their conversation, one or two sounds reached her ear, which, although they might doubtless momentarily have shocked or startled the old maid, in her heart she forgave them.

In due time Walter arrived in London, and was received by his uncle and aunt in a very affectionate manner—so much so, as to completely have dispelled the *mauvaise honte* which had oppressed him from the time he had quitted the railway station. In the course of the evening his uncle broached the subject to Walter of his contemplated marriage.

"I am afraid, Walter," he said, "that you may consider me somewhat niggardly in the arrangements I am going to propose, and all the more so as, having no children of my own, I look on you and your brother as my sons. At the same time, as I worked out my own fortune

myself, I think it will be only good practice to make you do the same. I intend to reside principally at the Red House, and shall leave you here as my substitute in the house of business, to act under my superintendence and advice, informing me of everything that takes place, so that I may be able to come up to town should I consider it necessary. At the same time, you must perfectly understand that, young as you are, it would be imprudent to place in your hands the whole control of the affairs during my absence, and I have therefore engaged a manager, a near relative of my partner, as well as an experienced book-keeper, under whom you will act. You must not imagine that the income I am going to allow you will enable you to live in any luxury, for that again will be contrary to my principles. I am perfectly well aware in the present day that a young couple generally expect to begin life with an establishment on the same footing as those of their fathers', but from the experience I have had, I have frequently found such an idea more likely to lead to evil than good. The salary I shall allow you will be four hundred a year, which I con-

sider ample for you to begin upon. If I find that you go on quietly and steadily, and live within your income, I shall gradually increase it, till at last I shall retire from the firm altogether, leaving my interests in it entirely to you and your brother."

Walter expressed his gratitude to his uncle for his kindness, and assured him that he would follow his advice in every respect.

"Very well, my boy. We have now but to consult Mr. Keats upon the matter, and from what I have seen and heard of him, I do not think you have much to dread from that quarter. I will go further, and acknowledge I have already told him of the income I proposed to allow you, and he has expressed his full satisfaction from the amount. Now, all that remains is for you to make the best impression on him that you can, and, as I said before, I have no doubt you will succeed. I am sure you will like him, for he is a gentlemanly, amiable, and highly educated man, and if not rich, of good family and connections. I do not, however, think he will agree to the wedding coming off at a very early date. Nor would I advise it.

Although I have no fear as to the manner you will conduct the business, at the same time I should like to have proof of your capability. In starting a corresponding office, especially one like that I intend establishing, which may at last become the principal branch of the firm, the first year is half the battle. I must have you keep well and steadily to business during the whole of that time; and if you do, I not only promise you a good long holiday for your wedding trip, but also to contribute liberally to the furnishing of your house. I say contribute, as I expect you will save something out of your year's income towards furnishing it yourself."

The next day Walter Morecombe and his uncle started for X——, and this time Mrs. Thornbury accompanied them. In the evening Walter was introduced to the Keats family, who were evidently on the tip-toe of expectation to see him. The young fellow made his appearance among them with a good deal of gentlemanly self-possession; the information he had received from his uncle the evening before—that Mr. Keats was perfectly satisfied with the amount of income he would have—greatly as-

sisted in dispelling the doubts which had hitherto existed in his mind.

The evening passed in talking over arrangements for the future, and other subjects connected with family affairs, already to a certain extent detailed to the reader in the conversation between Edgar Thornbury and his nephew the evening before they left London. Walter remained a few days at X——, making himself better acquainted with the family of Mr. Keats. He then returned to London with his aunt, his uncle having remained behind so as to superintend the alterations being carried on at the Red House.

CHAPTER V.

MARTHA RETURNS TO THE RED HOUSE.

THE winter passed without anything occurring particularly worthy of notice. Walter Morecombe, after his introduction to the family of his future bride, and his visit to the Red House, remained a few days longer at X——. During the time he partly occupied himself in writing a letter to his betrothed, of such fearful length, as would have caused a feeling of disgust in the mind of the "reader" of any Magazine or Review, to whose inspection it might have been offered, previous to an answer being returned as to whether its merits were sufficient to justify the editor in accepting it for publication.

In it, Walter, as requested by Fanny Keats, related minutely the ceremony of introduction to her family; how he had been received, and

what was the particular behaviour of each individual member. He also told her to which of her friends he had been introduced, the reception he had received from each separately, what he thought of them, and many other similar subjects of anxiety and curiosity to Fanny, but totally devoid of interest to the reader. His stay in X——was sufficiently long to allow of his receiving Fanny's reply, which, if possible, was even more destitute of anything interesting to a stranger, although it was considerably longer than her lover's, lengthy as that had been.

When Edgar Thornbury returned to London, he was busily occupied with his nephew in establishing the English branch of the Calcutta firm. It was a work of great labour and no little anxiety, but at last it was satisfactorily accomplished. The offices comprised a handsome suite of rooms in Moorgate Street, the outer one for the clerks, where the visitors on ordinary business matters and strangers were received, an inner room for the manager and head bookkeeper, another for Mr. Thornbury's sanctum; while Walter, who, as before stated, was to act as his uncle's private secretary, was in a fourth.

In a few months, to Edgar's great satisfaction, not only had everything settled down into a state of perfect organization, but business had increased so rapidly as to promise to fulfil his prognostications, that in time the London branch would become the head-quarters of the firm. Walter, by his attention to business, greatly pleased his uncle, and Edgar Thornbury was not a man to overlook either idleness or indifference on the part of a subordinate. And this was the more commendable on Walter's part, as he was at the time deeply in love with his betrothed, and it must have cost him no little effort to bring his mind to bear on the dull details of mercantile life. That he did so was clear from the commendations bestowed on him by his uncle; and that his unwearied application to counting-house duties did not arise from any want of ardour for the object of his affections, was shewn in the lengthy letters he dispatched to her. No matter to how late an hour he might have been detained at the office, no matter how harassing or difficult might have been the business he had been employed upon, he never closed his eyes at night till he had

written a letter to Fanny, ready for the next day's post.

As time passed on, the very assiduity Walter shewed in the office was indirectly the cause of more onerous duties being thrown upon him than those already entrusted to him. His uncle, seeing how completely he could rely upon Walter's discretion and application, as winter advanced, made more than one lengthened visit to the Red House to superintend the repairs and alterations going on there. These had been carried on with much vigour during the summer and autumn, so that before winter had set in almost the whole of the out-door work was completed. Still there remained the greater portion of the internal decorative part to be done, and as in this his opinion and that of his wife had to be consulted, Walter was for weeks together left in charge of the office; and thus he was obliged, after ordinary business was over, to write to his uncle an account of the transactions of the day, before he commenced his letter to Fanny.

When spring approached, all the repairs were finished, and the important duty of furnishing

commenced. During the time the visits of Edgar Thornbury to the Red House became more frequent, and the duties of his nephew more onerous. At last even the furnishing was completed; and when the upholsterer's men had left the house, Edgar and his wife minutely inspected the result of their labour and solicitude. And perfect was their content with all they had done—in fact, it would hardly be too strong an expression to say astonishment, so complete was the metamorphosis the house had undergone. The advice also of Dr. Keats, that nothing should be allowed to remain that might possibly remind Martha of the episodes which had occurred to her there, causing so singular an effect on her mental faculties, had been fully carried out.

All was now in order for Edgar Thornbury and his wife to take up their residence at the Red House, and they then left the ready-furnished house they had hired in London. Walter engaged apartments for himself at an easy distance from the office to which he was to remove. Before doing so, however, his uncle, finding that no mercantile speculation of any

importance was likely to occur for some time, and being much pleased with the assiduity his nephew had shown for so many months without any relaxation, determined to allow him a fortnight's holiday. It was arranged that the first ten days of it should be spent in Torquay, and his uncle during the time should occupy Walter's bachelor apartments in London, leaving Mrs. Thornbury at the Red House.

At the expiration of ten days Walter was to conduct his aunt and Fanny Keats to X——, where Edgar was to meet them; and then as soon as Martha was established at the Red House, he was to return to London and resume his ordinary duties. The ten days passed with most unsatisfactory celerity to the lovers, who hardly considered the happiness they had enjoyed during the time a sufficient compensation. The leave-taking of Martha and Fanny with Dr. Keats and his family, as well as the dispensary surgeon and his wife, was of the most friendly description, and the two gentlemen accompanied them to the railway station.

As the train was on the point of starting, and Martha, as a last adieu, was kissing her hand

to the doctor from the carriage window, Mr. Thompson the dispensary surgeon said,

"That's a splendid cure of yours, Keats. I never saw a better."

"Frankly, as far as it has gone, I have nothing to be ashamed of," was Dr. Keats' reply. "If she continues as well as she is now, it will be one of the most interesting and satisfactory cases I ever had under my management."

"If she continues as well?" said the surgeon, somewhat surprised, as he and the doctor turned to leave the station, the train having started. "Have you, then, any fear of a relapse? You are better up in psychology than I am, but I must confess I have not remarked in her one symptom of any sinister event of the kind."

"Nor have I," said Dr. Keats; "but it is frequently a long time before the effects of such terrible abnormal shocks on the nervous system are completely cured, even when not the slightest trace of their existence may be discernible. Frequently a very slight cause is sufficient to again destroy the mental equilibrium of a woman as susceptible as she is. The sight of some old well-remembered scene will occasionally

bring back to her mind the events which first brought on the original malady, and I never knew a case of the kind afterwards thoroughly cured."

"Would it not have been better for her to have remained in Torquay?" said Mr. Thompson.

"I certainly think it would have been the safer plan, and I should have given it as my opinion, had they appealed to me on the subject," said Dr. Keats. "At the same time, there may be no danger of a relapse in her case. Although she is to reside in the house where the mischief originated, her brother writes me word that not only it is so altered in appearance as hardly to seem like the same, but that every article of old furniture has been replaced by new. The first few days of her residence there will prove all. I have told her brother to watch her narrowly, and to let me know what effect her return to the house produces on her; and above all things to keep her spirits well up, so as to allow her mind to revert as little as possible to by-gone days. I sincerely hope all will go well with her, for a more amiable creature I never met with."

The journey to X—— was accomplished by Martha, her nephew and Fanny, without any difficulty. It had been arranged that Martha should sleep that night at the house of the Rev. Mr. Keats, and that her brother should drive over for her the next day, and convey her to the Red House. The meeting between Fanny and her family was most affectionate, and the joy of her parents at again seeing their child, from whom they had been separated for so many months, was further increased by her healthy appearance. Martha was also received by them rather as a dear relative than a friend, and the welcome to Walter was so warm, that had he already been Fanny's husband, it could hardly have been exceeded.

After the first excitement of meeting was over the evening passed in a most agreeable manner for all parties, conversation never flagging for a moment. Walter Morecombe possibly was an exception to the general content which reigned in the drawing-room, Fanny's society being completely monopolized by her mother and sisters, while Martha carried on a conversation with Mr. Keats, leaving Walter to console himself with

the society of the two younger brothers of his betrothed. Still, he bore his fate with great resignation and good-humour, and the time passed most satisfactorily with all; nor did they separate till the Cathedral clock told them it was midnight, a preposterously late hour for the well regulated families in the Cathedral Close. And even then, when prayers were over, the family, candles in hand, congregated in groups upon the landing places, and chatted together so energetically, preparatory to entering their chambers, that the master of the house was at last obliged to interfere, and insist on their retiring to their rooms.

The next morning after breakfast, Mrs. Keats proposed to Martha that they should call together on Dr. Wilson and his wife, from whom Martha had formerly received so much kind attention. They found them both at home, but so completely changed was his old patient in her appearance, that the doctor had some difficulty in recognizing her. In fact it would hardly be possible to imagine two persons more different than Martha Thornbury, since the time the worthy doctor brought her in his brougham

from the Red House, the morning she had been discovered by the errand boy in an almost dying condition, and the appearance she now presented. She was then miserably attenuated; now, she was, if not what might be called buxom, in certainly good condition, with the hue of health fully apparent on her countenance; while the insufficient and poverty-stricken clothing she then wore, was changed into a neat but handsome costume, perfectly befitting her position as a lady somewhat passed the grand climacteric. Her features had also considerably changed; the sunken anxious eye was now lighted up with pleasure at again meeting her preserver, the hollow cheeks were now filled up, showing the dimple natural to her when she smiled, and her mouth (the best feature in her face) shewed, when she spoke, a set of teeth as white and regular as they were when she was a girl of eighteen years of age. Altogether, had it not been for the traces of the small-pox, somewhat too visible on her face, she might have been called a handsome matronly-looking woman. The greeting between Martha and the doctor and his wife was a most friendly one. When

she left the house it was mutually agreed between them, that whenever she came to X—— she should call on them, and that Dr. Wilson would never be within a mile of the Red House without paying her a visit.

Mrs. Keats and Martha now returned home to await the arrival of Edgar Thornbury, who had promised to take luncheon with them. On entering the house they found that Fanny and one of her sisters, accompanied by Walter Morecombe, were absent paying some visits. To say the truth, Walter would willingly have remained at home, but as it was considered incumbent by Fanny that she should call on some intimates the morning after her return, her admirer had no choice but to accompany her. It is more than probable that Fanny was partly instigated by another feeling. She was intensely proud of Walter's appearance and gentlemanly manners, and she naturally wished to be a witness of the effect her lover made on her friends. And this was the more excusable, as Walter's leave of absence expired that day, and his uncle he knew to be too strict a disciplinarian to allow him the slightest hope of its being extended. Wal-

ter certainly behaved on the occasion in a most exemplary manner, and submitted with good-humoured patience to the scrutinizing glances he felt were being cast on him by the young ladies at the houses where they called. Their round of visits over, they returned home before the arrival of Walter's uncle.

About one o'clock Edgar Thornbury came to fetch his sister. After partaking of luncheon with the family, he told Walter he wished to have a little conversation with him on business matters; and Mr. Keats having placed his study at their disposal, the uncle and nephew retired to it. They were absent for perhaps half-an-hour, the time being occupied by Mr. Thornbury's giving Walter a description of the manner in which affairs had progressed during his holiday, and instructions as to the different subjects he was to attend to on his return to London. On re-entering the sitting-room, Mr. Thornbury was implored by the whole family to allow Walter to remain with them a few days longer, but he was inexorable. All they could obtain from him was, that Walter might return by the mail train if he pleased (the railway during Martha's ab-

sence at Torquay having been opened to X——), but that it was imperative he should be at the office the next morning. Slight as the boon was, it was accepted with gratitude, especially by the lovers, as the train was not due at X—— before midnight, and they would thus have the opportunity of passing another evening in each other's society.

The pony chaise was now brought to the door, and Martha took leave of her nephew and the Keats family, preparatory to starting for the Red House. Before quitting them she promised Walter she would write to him once a week, and said she should always expect a letter in reply. She also promised Fanny to visit her whenever she could get her brother to drive her over to X——, and she obtained leave for Fanny to pay a lengthened vist to the Red House as soon as she should be comfortably settled in her new abode.

"I willingly promise to grant your request," said Mr. Keats, "under the condition that Fanny does not leave us for some time. She has been so long absent that it would be cruel again to deprive us of her society at any early date."

"Why, Miss Thornbury," said Fanny, "I should have thought you must be tired of me by this time."

"That is hardly likely to occur, Fanny, my dear," said Martha, kissing her affectionately; "at the same time I am in your papa's hands, and the sooner he will let you come the better it will please me.'

"I do not see," said Edgar to his sister, "why you should take Fanny from her family, seeing she has been so long absent, though we should be delighted to see her whenever she pleases to come. You can visit X—, Martha, whenever you like, for Marguerite has made provision for that."

"In what way?" inquired Martha. "If I came as often as I wished I might be intruding on your time, Edgar."

"How so?"

"In getting you to drive me over."

"Learn to drive yourself, then, Martha," said her brother. "I will give you your first lesson this morning. Marguerite, anticipating that you would often wish to visit Fanny, and that when Fanny is with us she would often wish to see her family, ordered the little pony phaeton

which stands at the door to be built for you, and, with the pony which is in it, she begs you to accept it; so now, you see, you have no excuse. Let us start at once, and as soon as we get outside the town I shall insist on your taking the reins and driving me home, and every morning for some days to come I shall give you a lesson. I have no doubt in time you will be as good a charioteer as I am myself."

They now all went to the door to see the present Marguerite had made to Martha, which of course received the compliments of the whole party, and the especial thanks of Martha. Nor were the compliments undeserved, for altogether the carriage was not only a handsome one, but in neat and admirable taste, and the pony to all appearance a clever little animal. When the inspection was over, Martha took another short adieu of her friends, and, entering the carriage, Edgar took his seat by her side and drove rapidly off.

A short time after emerging from the town, Edgar stopped the pony, and insisted on Martha occupying his seat, so as to commence her first lesson in the art of driving.

"But, my dear brother," she said, "I never shall have the courage to drive such a spirited little pony as that." (For on more than one occasion she had been somewhat alarmed by the velocity of its pace). "You should have got for me a steadier animal, such as an old woman might drive with impunity."

"Nonsense, Martha! I tell you the pony is as good-tempered a little fellow as ever was foaled; and in a short time I am certain you and he will be excellent friends. Now, in the first place, Martha," said Edgar, taking his seat by her side, "remember that the pony has a very tender mouth, and so use your reins as lightly as possible. That is one great advantage with you women when you drive. As soon as you gain confidence you have a much lighter hand than men. Your whip with Toby (for that is his name) will have nearly a sinecure of it; still, as he is a cunning little fellow, it is occasionally worth while to let him know you have it in your hand, even though you use it more as a hint to him than a punishment. Now look straight before you on the road, and be sure you keep to your right side, and all will go smoothly enough."

For some time Martha drove with great care and most serious expression of countenance, as if she were performing a duty on which life or death depended. Presently she became more accustomed to her occupation. The rigidity of position she had first assumed gradually began to thaw, and in a short time she found herself comparatively at ease, as well as becoming convinced that to drive a pony was not the chivalrous or dangerous occupation she at first thought. For some time after she had taken the reins in her hand she maintained a strict silence, or merely replied to any remark of her brother by a short monosyllable, as if determined to allow nothing to distract her attention from the serious occupation she was engaged in; but afterwards she found her tongue, and conversed with her brother with considerable volubility. Edgar, on his part, endeavoured to keep up the conversation as briskly as possible, not solely actuated, as might be imagined, by the pleasure of conversing with his sister, but from the advice of Dr. Keats to keep her mind as fully occupied as possible, not only on the road to the Red House, but for some days afterwards, so as to

allow it to revert to old associations as little as possible. If all passed off well, he said, for a week after her arrival, there need be no apprehension of a relapse; and Edgar determined to follow the advice given him to the letter.

They had now arrived at the turnpike gate mentioned in our first chapter, and Martha pulled up for a moment, to allow her brother to give the man the ticket.

"Fine morning, sir," said Mr. Carter, the postmaster and general shopkeeper, who was at the moment standing outside his door, and who already had had the good fortune to inscribe Mr. Thornbury on the list of his customers, and was consequently particularly obsequious to him.

"Beautiful indeed," said Edgar. "I hope the farmers will be content at last."

"It would be the first time in their lives then, sir," remarked Mr. Carter.

"I suspect you are about right there, Carter," said Mr. Thornbury laughing. "Good morning." Then continuing to Martha in a whisper, "Drive on, Martha, and let us get home. Touch the pony lightly with the whip, merely as a signal that you want him to move."

Martha did as she was requested, and the pony started off at a brisk trot.

"I wonder whether Mr. Carter remembered me; did you remark how he stared at me?" said Martha.

"No, I did not, Martha," said Edgar somewhat hastily, not wishing to revert to the past. Then suddenly changing the subject, he continued. "Now, to go on with my lesson, do you see the advantage of the whip when used lightly? It not only conveyed to the pony your wish that he should go on, but at the same time brought to his recollection that you had it in your hand. As I said before, you will seldom have occasion to use it as an instrument of punishment, but if you do, give him a proof that you can punish, and severely too, if requisite; and you will be all the better friends with him on the long run."

In the meantime Mr. Carter stood at his shop door, watching the brother and sister as they drove off, as if deeply perplexed in his mind. When the pony carriage was out of sight, he turned round and said to his wife,

"Who could that lady possibly be, driving

with Mr. Thornbury? Her face is as familiar to me as my own, and for the life of me I can't remember who she is."

"I can," said his wife, "although at the first glance I hardly knew her myself."

"Who is she?"

"Why, the woman that was nearly dead in the Red House, when you found her there that morning."

"I hope, wife, she never heard anything of your objections to serve her; if so, we might lose a capital customer."

"How should she have heard of it if not through you? Giles has now been gone for a soldier more than nine months, and he is the only one that ever heard us speak on the subject. Besides, if she had heard of it, she would be an ungrateful creature indeed, if she hasn't forgiven it after all the kindness you shewed her on the day you found her in a dying state."

The pony carriage had now arrived at the "Brickmakers' Arms," the spot at which the road to the Red House turned off from the highway. Edgar noticed that Martha had become rather more silent and abstracted, and as

they went on, that she looked with great interest at different objects they passed, evidently re-calling to her mind certain episodes which had taken place either in connection with them, or near the spot. As they approached the Red House, her taciturnity increased. The nearer home they came the more rapidly did these objects present themselves, and the deeper became Martha's abstraction, although she made no remark whatever concerning them. When they arrived at the entrance to the grounds, a very perceptible change came over her countenance. There was mingled in its surprise, bewilderment and excitement, as she gazed with intense curiosity on everything around her. The dilapidated gate was no longer thrown on the grass beside the carriage drive, nor was the lodge the same as she had left it—tenantless and in ruins. A handsome modern gothic cottage occupied the spot on which the old lodge formerly stood, and some four or five healthy-looking children were playing under the porch. A cry from one of them having informed their mother of Edgar's arrival, a remarkably neat, good-looking young woman came out, and curtseying

to them, drew back the gate to allow them to pass in.

As Martha drove slowly up to the house, the condition of the grounds strongly attracted her attention; so much so, in fact, that her brother was more than once on the point of taking the reins from her hand, as she appeared to have lost all command over the pony. What she had left a tangled field of weeds and briers had been changed into beautifully kept and tastefully planned pleasure grounds. On each side of the carriage road was a lawn, interspersed with flower beds and shrubberies, which stretched between the road and the house. Though much surprised at the alterations she saw, Martha uttered not a single word of comment, but that she was feeling deeply was evident by her flushed countenance and anxious searching eye. On coming close to the house, however, a short low cry of wonder escaped her, and for a moment she appeared to be labouring under great excitement, but which soon subsided. There was certainly considerable cause for her wonder, for the change which had taken place at the Red House was great indeed. A handsome portico,

as much in keeping with the façade of the house as its architecture would allow, had been built, and this was approached by a broad flight of stone steps. The thick clumsy window frames had been replaced by sheets of plate glass; and, in fact, every improvement which good taste could suggest, had been adopted to give a lively modern air to the somewhat quaint and old-fashioned mansion.

Martha, on alighting, was welcomed with affectionate cordiality by her sister-in-law, who stood under the portico to receive her; and Edgar, having given the pony-chaise in charge to a stable man, entered the hall with them, when he warmly embraced his sister, and expressed the great joy both he and his wife felt at having her to reside with them. Although Martha returned her brother's embrace with equal affection and sincerity, there was a certain perplexed look in her countenance which did not escape him, and he rightly judged the cause. Everything around them had been changed. Handsome oak double doors, with ornamented sheets of plate glass inserted in them, screened the inner hall from the cold

when the outer door was open. The huge oak staircase had been thoroughly repaired and highly polished, as well as considerably altered. The walls of the staircase were of a different colour from what they had been when she last saw them ; and the whole aspect of the place was so changed, that she had some difficulty in believing it to be the same.

Mrs. Thornbury now conducted her sister-in-law into the dining-room, in which such strange scenes had taken place before Martha's departure. If the change in the appearance of the hall had been great, that in the room they now entered far exceeded it. Not an article of the original furniture remained in it—all was modern. An exquisitely carved Italian chimney-piece had been erected, on which was a magnificent mirror, which reached to the ceiling. The walls had been newly decorated, and were hung with pictures of considerable value, and selected with excellent taste.

They remained in the parlour chatting together for some time, Edgar narrowly watching his sister the while. Her mind appeared to be completely bewildered, and although she an-

swered the questions and carried on the conversation with Mrs. Thornbury lucidly enough, her brother had no difficulty in concluding from the wandering of her eye to different parts of the room, that she was endeavouring to recall to her memory the strange episodes which had there taken place, but without a single thing in it to aid her.

Mrs. Thornbury also noticed the bewildered expression on Martha's countenance, and thinking that she might possibly be fatigued by her journey, proposed that she should go to her bedroom and rest herself, before dinner was announced. Martha mechanically rose from her chair, and was conducted by Mrs. Thornbury into her bedroom, which was the same she had occupied since she was a girl. Here she found an equally great metamorphosis, all the furniture in the room being new, and instead of the dingy bed hangings, which had originally been purchased when Martha's father conducted his newly-married bride to her home, there were now others of fresh chintz, of a cheerful pattern—roses on a white ground, and window curtains of the same. Indeed, not an article

remained in the room which could possibly have reminded her of the many years she had occupied it.

After telling Martha that a lady's maid had been engaged to wait on her, and when she required her services she had but to ring the bell, Mrs. Thornbury left the room. As soon as Martha found herself alone, she sat down in an easy-chair near the bed, and endeavoured for some time to drive from her mind the sense of bewilderment which oppressed it. In spite of all her efforts, however, she was unable to reduce her thoughts to any settled order—a mental condition peculiarly painful to the methodical old maid. Visions of the past came floating before her, mixed in a most heterogeneous manner with the objects she saw around her. Finding all efforts to calm her thoughts to be fruitless, she determined to try the efficacy of prayer, and placing herself on her knees, she offered up a supplication that her mind might recover its natural tone, and that she might be able to appreciate at their just value the comforts and blessings which now surrounded her, and which appeared even stronger when com-

pared with the penury and privation she had suffered before quitting the house.

Long and earnest was Martha's prayer, but in the end it was heard and answered, and when she rose from her knees and again seated herself in the easy-chair, she was as calm and self-possessed as if she had been in her bedroom at Torquay. She now thought coolly over her position, and even began to sketch out plans for the employment of her time; and she continued this train of thought till the first dinner bell rang, when some one knocked at her door, and a female voice inquired if she might enter. Martha, having replied in the affirmative, the door opened, and a remarkably neat-looking young woman entered.

"I came, miss," she said to Martha, "to ask if I could assist you to dress for dinner, as Mrs. Thornbury, when she engaged me, told me I was only to wait on you."

"I do not see what you can do for me," said Martha, "unless my luggage has arrived. Have you heard anything about it? From what the man told me, who had been engaged by Mr. Thornbury to bring it, it ought to have been here before this."

"I have heard nothing about it, miss," said Cooper, for that was the name of Martha's lady's-maid; "but I will run downstairs to see if it has come, and return immediately."

So saying the girl left the room. In a few minutes she returned saying the luggage had not yet arrived, but that Mrs. Thornbury had desired her to say that if she could lend her anything she would be most happy to do so.

"Will there be any company here to-day?" inquired Martha.

"No, miss, only two gentlemen, no ladies."

"Well, then," said Martha, who, like most maiden ladies of her age, was more anxious about the appearance of her dress when in the presence of ladies than gentlemen, "I think I shall be able to manage without troubling Mrs. Thornbury."

Martha's very simple toilette was now rapidly arranged, and after giving her maid the keys of her boxes, so that on their arrival she might arrange their contents in the wardrobe and drawers, she descended to the drawing-room, where she found her brother and the two guests. Edgar immediately introduced his sister, and

shortly afterwards Mrs. Thornbury joined them, when dinner was announced, and they proceeded to the dining-room.

The dinner passed off most satisfactorily, and Martha, who preserved all her self-possession, took her part in the conversation. Once or twice her brother noticed her look around her with a somewhat puzzled expression, as if she had difficulty in realizing her present position, possibly caused by the air of bustling life in the room, the numerous servants, and the cheerful conversation, forming so strong a contrast with the tomb-like solitude and silence which had formerly pervaded the house, but she rapidly recovered herself. At last, on a signal from Marguerite, she left the room with her, and the gentlemen soon after joined them in the drawing-room.

The party separated at an early hour, the two guests having some distance to go, and Martha, who perhaps was suffering more from mental than bodily fatigue, wished her brother and sister good night, and retired to her room.

The next morning, when Martha appeared at the breakfast-table, she seemed in excellent

health and spirits, not a particle of the perplexity she had suffered the previous day being visible in her countenance. She chatted in a lively manner with her brother and sister, and complimented them on the vast improvements they had made in the house, and the excellent taste they had displayed.

"Do not compliment us so warmly at present," said Edgar, "or you may want words to express your admiration of all I shall presently show you. You have not yet seen a tithe of our labours, has she, Marguerite?"

"No, my dear," said Marguerite, "there is a great deal more to see yet."

"As soon as breakfast is over, Martha," said her brother, "we will make a tour of inspection, both of the house and grounds. One thing, however, I must insist on. If anything strikes you may be further done to contribute to your personal comfort, you will tell us, and it shall be attended to. Although we intend keeping you with us as a prisoner for the term of your natural life, we are perfectly ready to do all in our power to render your imprisonment as little irksome as possible."

Martha of course stated that she was fully convinced it would be impossible for her to desire anything more than her brother and sister had kindly provided for her; and the breakfast being over, Edgar offered her his arm, and they left the room together.

Martha was first conducted over the house. She found that all the rooms, as well as the kitchen and offices on the basement, had been returned to their original uses. The library—the room which the reader may remember as having been used for cooking purposes by Martha and Deborah after the kitchen had been abandoned,—had especially undergone great alterations. Handsome book-cases now filled the space formerly occupied by the old shelves, but they were as yet empty. The library furniture was all new, and a handsome stained-glass window had replaced the old one. To Martha's inquiries why the books had not been placed in the book-cases, her brother told her that the furnishing of the room had only just been completed, and as he intended making her useful in the establishment, he requested she would accept the office of honorary librarian.

"I know you were always fond of reading, Martha," he said, "and I fancied it would just be the occupation to suit you. All the books are in a lumber room upstairs, a great desecration, no doubt you will say, but, to use a nautical proverb, 'any port in a gale.' While the workmen were about, we thought the books would be safer there than anywhere else. When you feel inclined to begin, call Cooper your maid, to assist you. The girl has had a very decent education, and I am sure will not object to the job. If she is not strong enough to carry the larger volumes, get some of the men to assist her."

Martha readily accepted the appointment, but proposed waiting till Fanny Keats should visit her, as she thought she would be more useful in forming a catalogue and arranging the books than her maid.

"Just as you please, Martha," said her brother, "only remember that the library, for the future, is under your especial charge."

Having thoroughly inspected the house, Edgar now proposed to show his sister the alterations he had effected in the out-houses and

grounds. He first conducted her into the conservatory, which adjoined the drawing-room, and which, when she had quitted the house, like everything about it, was in a lamentable state of ruin and dilapidation. It was now in perfect order, and filled with the choicest flowers. From the conservatory they went into the pleasure-grounds immediately surrounding the house. So completely had their whole aspect been changed, that but for the position of the fine old trees with which they were studded, she would hardly have known them again. They next went into the meadows, and in one of them she saw an object, unromantic enough in itself, which recalled to her memory some of the scenes of her earlier childhood. By the side of the meadow they were in, and under a dwarf thick-set hedge, with some old trees here and there in it, was a small ditch some three feet wide. It had been a feat with Charity and Edgar, when children, to leap across this ditch, which they could easily do; while poor Martha, when she had been tempted by them to make the trial, did it in a remarkably clumsy manner, generally eliciting thereby the good-humoured

laughter of her brother and sister. By chance the reminiscence struck Edgar at the same moment that it did Martha.

"Do you remember," he said to her, "the games we used to have when children in leaping across the ditch, and the fun it used to cause us when you could not manage it?"

"Very well," answered Martha, "and a very naughty boy you were."

"Oh! come now, Martha, don't talk in that manner," said her brother, "or I shall remind you of a certain pragmatical little monkey who seemed to think her mission on earth was to keep her more talented brother and sister in order. And when you did play the girl instead of the governess, very ridiculous did you appear in the youthful character. One particular day I remember very well. In a fit of most unaccustomed buoyant hilarity, you attempted to leap across the ditch, and in doing so you nearly tore your frock from your shoulders. A pretty absurd figure you made, with the ruefu face you put on when you perceived the mischief you had done. Poor Charity was seated at the time under that tree, and when she found

you were not hurt, how she laughed! You were so frequently lecturing her about accidents of the kind, that to be guilty of a similar fault yourself seemed to amuse her exceedingly."

"I remember the circumstance perfectlywell," said Martha, now without the slightest merriment in her tone.

His sister's manner immediately caught the attention of Edgar. He gazed in her face, and from the sad expression on it, he easily perceived he had touched on a dangerous subject. Abruptly changing the conversation, he led her from the field, and they continued their walk till they had visited every part of the grounds, and also the stables, and they then returned to the house.

CHAPTER VI.

THE RAILWAY NAVVIES.

FOR several weeks everything went on smoothly enough at the Red House. The weather continuing fine, Martha was able to take a daily lesson in driving from her brother, and at last became so proficient, that she had no longer any need of his superintendence. With the assistance of a smart stable-boy, promoted to the dignity of her groom, she now not only drove fearlessly and skilfully about the country, but in the end attained sufficient courage to drive into X——, and frequent were the visits she made to the Keats family. Occasionally she would go so far as to leave her little groom at Mr. Keats's house, and take her friend and protegée, Fanny, to pay visits in the neighbourhood, her father having no carriage of his own. She had more than once proposed to her bro-

ther to make a pilgrimage to the village where Deborah died, and visit her grave; but Edgar always conjured up some objection, not wishing to bring back to his sister's mind any reminiscence of the past—at any rate, till she was more perfectly accustomed to her new method of life.

At last the time arrived for Fanny Keats to pay her long promised visit to Martha. At first Mr. Keats somewhat demurred, but at the earnest solicitation of Martha he at last withdrew his objections, and gave permission for his daughter to remain at the Red House for one month, under the condition that she should drive over at least once a week to see them, wind and weather permitting. To this Martha readily agreed, and the morning after receiving permission from Mr. Keats she drove over for Fanny, and leaving her little groom to follow with the carrier who was to bring the luggage, she took her back with her to the Red House, where a bed-room had been selected for her beside the one occupied by Martha.

When breakfast was over the following morning, and Martha and Mr. Thornbury were de-

ploring the unfavourable state of the weather (it was raining hard at the time), and regretting that Fanny would be kept a prisoner to the house all day, Edgar said,

"It appears to me, Martha, that you have completely forgotten the only duty I imposed on you when you took up your residence with us."

"To what do you allude, Edgar?"

"Did you not promise to take the library under your especial management, having first arranged and catalogued the books; and have you made the slightest attempt to keep that promise? Martha, I am sorry to find you have so little respect for your word."

"My dear brother, let me ask you in what manner I have broken my word. Was it not agreed that I should wait till Fanny came? And now I am perfectly ready to begin this day, if you please, especially as there appears but little chance of our being able to go out. What do you say, Fanny, will you assist me?"

"Yes, and with great pleasure," was Fanny's reply. "There is nothing I like better than sorting and arranging books. I have papa's

study completely under my management. I can find him any book he wishes for at a moment's notice."

"Very well, then," said Martha, "I will call Cooper, and we will set to work presently. Edgar, dear, have you any blank book which will serve for our catalogue? Cooper shall dust the books, I will examine their titles, and read them to Fanny, who shall write them down, and by thus dividing our work I have no doubt we shall get on admirably."

"I have a blank book which will suit you, I think, perfectly well. I will send for it immediately, so you have no longer any excuse. But joking apart, Martha," he continued, "I shall not be sorry to see the library in order. There is nothing more absurd to me than to see a library filled up with book-cases and shelves destitute of books. I am also curious to know in what condition you will find them. A good many, I have no doubt, will be found in a very dilapidated state. Such as are worth binding you must place aside, and I will forward them to London to be bound. Those which are worthless you must throw aside to be torn up,

and the remainder put in order on the shelves. Now you have all your instructions, so commence operations as soon as you please."

Martha and Fanny applied themselves at once to their task, and after having summoned Cooper to assist them, they went upstairs into the room where the books had been heaped together on the floor, covered with a cloth to protect them from the dust. A little table was placed in one part of the room, at which Fanny seated herself, with the book Edgar Thornbury had given for the catalogue, and a pen and ink. Martha took her seat near, and Cooper, duster in hand, after having removed the cloth which covered the books, commenced her work by taking them one at a time, and, after carefully dusting it, handed it to Martha, who inspected it, and then either told Fanny its title to enter in the book, or else placed it aside to be bound or destroyed. A footman in attendance carried below those which had been selected for the library. In this manner some hours passed pleasantly enough, all keeping sedulously to their work. Luncheon being ready, Martha and Fanny left their occupation, but so interested were they in it, that

after a short rest they returned to it again, although both Edgar and his wife advised them to do no more that day. They worked on, however, till it was nearly four o'clock, when Cooper took from the floor a small book which had formerly been very handsomely bound, but which was now considerably worn. Cooper had just commenced dusting it when it caught Martha's eye, and she immediately took it from the girl's hand, and, with the dust thick upon it, opened it. On the fly-leaf was written,

"To her dear sister Martha, on her seventeenth birthday.

"CHARITY THORNBURY."

For some moments Martha gazed at the book as if fascinated by it, and then her eyes began to fill with tears. Fanny, who had been waiting pen in hand for Martha to speak, turned round and asked her the name of the book.

"Oh! it is no matter," said Martha, placing the book in her pocket. "It is only a prayer-book I had when I was a girl. Go on, Cooper."

The girl did as she was told; but although Martha went on mechanically for some time

with her task, she had evidently no interest in it, and at last, pleading fatigue, she proposed to Fanny that they should cease their labours for that day; and she then retired to her room, which she did not leave again till the bell rang for dinner. There were several guests at the table that evening, and among them Mr. and Mrs. Keats. During the meal, Martha, contrary to her habit when in the society of Fanny's parents, appeared thoughtful and abstracted, although they were exceedingly chatty and communicative, giving her many details of the generally somewhat uninteresting events of the Cathedral Close, and the state of affairs of mutual friends. Still, Martha continued silent and thoughtful, evidently making great efforts to force her attention to their remarks, but with very little success; nor could they fail to notice the slight effect their attempts to amuse her produced. In the drawing-room her languor and abstraction seemed to increase, and Mrs. Thornbury said she feared she had over-fatigued herself. Martha admitted the possibility, and pleading it as an excuse for retiring, she wished her friends good night and sought her room.

When in the solitude of her chamber, Martha, as soon as her maid had left her, threw herself in the easy-chair, and soon became deeply absorbed in the reminiscences of the times when Charity had made her a present of the prayer-book; and she then by degrees began to trace up the different events of their lives when children, her ideas flowing, not continuously, but appearing to come almost at random, though possibly each succeeding one was elicited by some indirect incident contained in the former. In fact, the time when Charity made her the gift, seemed to form the centre of the different events which now crowded on her memory. She remembered that the room in which the book was found was the one which had been assigned to her and her brother and sister as a play-room, and this brought to her mind the sickness and death of her little brother George. This again led her to think of the time when Charity had died and left her two sons to Martha's care, the younger being at the time about the age of her deceased little brother. The two children then brought the events of Charity's life more completely before

her; and then her own crowded so rapidly on her, that she became utterly absorbed in them, and appeared even to forget the fact of her own existence.

Martha remained in this state for two or three hours, when the noise of Fanny Keats entering her bedroom aroused her, and rising from her chair, she finished her preparations for bed as softly as possible, that Fanny might not be aware of the fact that she had not yet retired to rest, and thus suspect that the excuse she gave for leaving the company in the drawing-room was not a real one; while Fanny, on her part, made as little noise as possible, fearing she might otherwise disturb Martha in her sleep.

When in bed, Martha for some time felt no disposition to slumber, but continued the train of thought which had previously occupied her. Possibly her inability to sleep might in some way be accounted for by the fact that the moonbeams—for the weather in the evening had cleared up, and the night was lovely—poured through her chamber window and through the curtains with such intensity as to render every object in the room perfectly visible. The

current of thought which now occupied Martha was more vivid than it had been when she was seated in her arm-chair, and it centred principally on the events of Charity's life, especially those which occurred about the time she had presented her with the prayer-book, and her subsequent courtship and marriage. At last scarcely a thought crossed her imagination which was not connected with Charity; and in this manner she continued till the turret-clock over the stables had struck two, when she fell into a sort of waking dream, neither a natural slumber nor fully awake. Still, the same current of thought continued, but as in a dream, the objects which presented themselves to her mind had all the vividness of life without much continuity of action. At last she awoke, and in the act of awaking she saw, standing by her bedside, the figure of her sister Charity, the moonlight falling full upon her form, as when she had appeared to Martha the night she had informed her of having received a message from heaven that both she and her baby would soon die, and wearing the same imploring look upon her countenance as when she

asked Martha to watch over the welfare of her two boys.

So vivid was Charity's presence at the time that Martha started up in her bed; but momentary as had been her movement, the figure of Charity had fled. A sense of awe now came over Martha with such intensity as almost to deprive her of the power of breathing—yet unmingled with one particle of fear. Presently a doubt seemed to cross her mind whether the figure she had seen was the shade of her departed sister, or whether Fanny Keats (whose room, as before stated, joined Martha's, and was the one in which Charity died) anxious about her state of health, as she had pleaded indisposition when leaving the drawing-room, had not softly entered to see her, and finding her asleep, had quitted it as gently as she came. Martha, to be certain on the point, rose from her bed and went to the door of communication between the two rooms, which she not only found closed, but locked on her own side, clearly proving that it could not have been Fanny she had seen. She now again sought her bed, fully convinced that the spirit of her sister had visited her for

some especial purpose—but what could it be? The phantom had made no sign by which Martha could form the slightest idea on the subject. All she could remark was an intense expression of anxiety and love combined, visible on her countenance.

Martha now looked anxiously at the spot beside her bed where Charity had appeared, but she returned not. After waiting for some time in vain she prayed to the Almighty, that should Charity have been sent on any special mission, she might again be allowed to appear; and her prayer over, her mind became calmer, and before dawn had broken she had fallen into a quiet, refreshing slumber.

Next morning when Martha presented herself at the breakfast-table, she appeared to have fully recovered the effect of what her brother and his wife had imagined to be the previous day's fatigue. To their inquiries and those of Fanny's as to the state of her health, and how she had passed the night, she replied calmly that she felt completely recovered, and, in fact, had never been in better health in her life. Her conversation during the meal was calm, and to

the point, nor did she, as on the previous evening, fail to take her place in the conversation, although it appeared to her brother there was an unusually serious tone in her voice. He made no remark, however, beyond suggesting that as the morning was a beautiful one, Martha ought to take Fanny for a drive. To this Martha objected, and told her brother that she intended occupying herself with the books as on the day before, which was, however, strongly opposed by Edgar, who said he could easily perceive that being shut up for so long a time in a close room with the books had done her no good, and that she had better defer her labours for a little time, or till some wet day should oblige her to remain in the house.

At last a compromise was entered into, that a couple of hours in the morning should be occupied with the books, and in the afternoon she was to drive Fanny to see her father and mother, and inquire whether they had reached home the previous evening without inconvenience. This being agreed to by all parties, Martha and Fanny again commenced their labours amongst the books, assisted by Cooper

as before. On this occasion they came to some elementary educational works of little value, which had been used by Martha and her brother and sister in their school days, and which she had not required when instructing her little nephews. Few and uninteresting as they were, she appeared to take far more notice of them than of any which had yet passed through her hands. After Cooper had dusted them, Martha would neither allow them to be thrown aside to be destroyed, or marked down on the catalogue, saying she would take charge of them herself. Her two hours' labour being now up, she took the school books into her bed-room, where she remained till luncheon was ready.

It may here be stated that for three days afterwards, they continued the inventory of the books, Martha setting aside, as before, the few school books she met with, and taking them with her to her own room. Of the others, those in sufficiently good preservation, after being duly catalogued by Fanny, were placed on the shelves in the library, the rest which required to be rebound were packed in cases and sent to London, and the library arrangements were then

pronounced by Edgar Thornbury to be complete.

When luncheon was over, the pony-carriage was brought to the door, and Martha and Fanny prepared themselves for their drive. They reached X—— without difficulty, and remained chatting with Mr. Keats and his family till it was time for them to return to dinner. As they drove home, Martha pulled up at Mr. Carter's shop, and giving the reins to Fanny, she entered it to make some trifling purchases. She was now on very good terms with the shopkeeper and his wife, and she seldom passed the house without having a few words of conversation with them, if she saw either of them at the door, as she justly considered Mr. Carter as having been mainly instrumental in the preservation of her life. On his side, Mr. Carter, without any feeling of disrespect, seemed to look upon Martha as partially a being of his own creation, for whom he entertained the sort of affectionate respect a humble relative would feel for one in a superior station, on whom he had conferred a great benefit, yet was perfectly contented to allow the reminiscence of the good he had

effected to be his reward. Even Mrs. Carter seemed to brighten up when she saw Martha, and always received her with marked respect. She even went so far as to acknowledge to her husband, in confidence, that people ought to be very careful in forming their opinion of others, as she was now ready to admit she had done Miss Thornbury an injustice. The idea at the time crossed her husband's mind that the only unfavourable conclusion his wife had ever arrived at with respect to Martha, was one, after all, perfectly just—that Martha's custom was not at the time worth having.

On her present visit to the shop Martha stayed so long, that when she again entered the pony-chaise, Fanny said to her,

"Why do you always buy the things you want at that shop, when there are so many others, and infinitely better, in X——?"

"Do not imagine, Fanny, that I deal there for any superior estimation I hold the articles they sell in. I owe a debt of gratitude to Mr. Carter, and the most delicate way I have of paying it, and the one most gratifying to his feelings, is by purchasing what few articles I want at his shop."

Martha then told Fanny that it was through the energy of Mr. Carter her life had been saved, by discovering her in a dying condition at the Red House.

The conversation continued on the same subject till they had arrived at the "Brickmakers' Arms," where they perceived, seated on some benches outside, a number of rough-looking men, intermixed with women and children, many of the men carrying pickaxes and shovels. A group of idlers had also gathered around them. They took no notice of Martha as she passed, beyond casting a glance of curiosity at her. When she had gone on about a few hundred yards, she saw two men of the same class advancing towards the public-house, as if to join those already assembled there. Although they appeared only to be poor labouring men, there was a singular difference between the two. One, in the dress of a railway navvy, was of middle age, athletic build, and apparently of Herculean strength. His trousers were rolled up nearly to his knees, his feet shod with the professional clumsy thick-soled boots, or ankle-jacks, the upper leather reaching as high as the

calf of the leg, and a bundle, containing, probably, his wardrobe, slung over his right shoulder, while on the left he carried a pickaxe and shovel. The neck of his shirt was thrown open, but he had a coarse handkerchief tied in a knot round his throat, and he wore a billicock hat on his head. His features had not been badly formed by nature, but appeared to have been beaten out of shape either by accident or pugilistic encounters, and the expression of his face was stolid in the extreme. The only sentiment he seemed capable of expressing was one of brute ferocity, and that only when his mental faculties had been sufficiently aroused to call it into action, while the most intellectual enjoyment he could appreciate was the unhealthy stimulus afforded to the brain by the consumption of beer and spirits. Altogether, he was about as perfect a type of a brutal excavator as could be imagined.

His companion, as before stated, was a man of a very different cast. In the first place, he was at least ten or fifteen years the senior of the two, and although somewhat above the middle height, and of powerful build, he did not

seem legitimately to belong to the working classes. He was shabbily dressed in a suit of clothes, half working man's, half tramp's. His face formerly might have been good-looking, but his features were hardly distinguishable, being partly concealed by his unshaven beard, as well as the iron grey hair which hung in disorder by the side of his face, and the slouched hat shading his forehead and eyes. He carried no working tools, but in their place a thick bludgeon. There was a certain sort of disreputable recklessness about his carriage, which rendered him even more objectionable in his appearance than his companion. No woman or unarmed man would have liked to have met him in a dark narrow lane, old as he was. His companion might have been passed without suspicion or danger of being robbed, unless, in fact, he was in want, when few scruples of conscience would have stood in his way, especially if he had no prospect of work at the time, while the elder man would evidently rather have robbed than worked.

When Martha saw the two men approaching, she started her pony off into a smart trot, and

thus rapidly passed them. But momentary as had been her glance at them as well as Fanny's, it was long enough for them both to conceive a feeling of dislike, and even positive fear. The figure of the elder man was especially objectionable to Martha, and although not of a nervous temperament, now one easily alarmed, she could not divest herself of the impression he had caused. She drove her pony homewards at so rapid a pace as not only caused some nervousness in the mind of Fanny Keats, but considerable surprise to her steed, who had hitherto been but little accustomed to the whip, and now indignant at the treatment, seemed strongly inclined to take the bit between his teeth, and gallop on as briskly as possible, on purpose to spite her. In fact, so rapid had been his pace, that when he arrived at the lodge gates he was covered with a white foam, thereby eliciting much wonder in the mind of the stable man who came from the yard when he heard the carriage approach, as—to use his own expression—Miss Thornbury generally brought him home without a hair on his back being turned.

It was so late in the afternoon before Martha and Fanny reached home, that the dinner bell had already rung. As no guests were there that day, they were occupied but a short time in dressing, and they then hurried downstairs to mitigate the lecture they anticipated receiving from Mr. Thornbury on the sin of keeping dinner waiting—a fault in his eyes of great magnitude. However, on this occasion he said nothing; indeed his mind appeared so occupied with some other matter as to be able to give but little attention to his sister and her friend's late arrival. At table, also, his manner continued silent and abstracted. Nor was he alone so, for Martha hardly spoke a word except in reply to observations made to her by Mrs. Thornbury, who attempted now and then to force the conversation, but finding it impracticable, she gave up the effort, and became as silent as her brother and sister-in-law, leaving poor Fanny, who would willingly have conversed if she could, to follow their example.

In this manner the dinner passed off quietly and uncomfortably enough, until the servants had left the room, when Edgar suddenly said to his sister,

"Martha, my dear, what ails you? Have you lost the use of your tongue that you say nothing? Why, Fanny has been sitting waiting for somebody to speak to her for the last half hour, while you take no more notice of her than if she were on another visit to her uncle in Torquay,"

"Well, Edgar, I am very sorry, but at the same time are you altogether blameless in the matter? You have certainly not been more loquacious than I have, has he, Marguerite?"

"Well," said Edgar, before his wife had time to reply, "I admit I have been somewhat more silent than a hospitable host ought to be, but I have cause for abstraction, you have none. Some two or three years since the directors of the X—— railway obtained a bill to make a branch line, which would run through one of my finest meadows, completely dividing it into two parts, so that it will be impossible for the cattle to cross from one to the other. Unfortunately no opposition on my part was made at the time to their application, and the bill passed into law. For want of funds, however, they were not able to commence operations,

but at last it seems they have obtained them, and they are going to set to work without delay. Already a powerful gang of excavators have arrived, and not only is every bed taken in the village, but they are building sheds for them to reside in while the works are in progress, which will certainly last for twelve or eighteen months. Although I am afraid I have no redress beyond compensation for the injury they will do to my property in forming the line, I must see that I am fully remunerated for that, at any rate, so I intend starting for London by the early train to-morrow, to place the affair in the hands of my solicitor."

"Shall you be long absent, my dear?" inquired Mrs. Thornbury.

"I cannot form an idea, Marguerite. I have also some rather complicated Indian business to attend to, through which I do not see my way very clearly. I am rather discontented too with Walter, as his letters have not been as explicit and clear of late as they ought to be. I have not heard from him for the last three days, while he can find time to write to Fanny every day. I hope, however, not to be absent

for more than a week at the longest. If I cannot return by that time, or a day or two afterwards, I shall write to you, Marguerite, to join me in London, leaving Martha in charge of the house. And now, Martha," he continued, "as I have told you all, perhaps you will be equally explicit and tell me what is weighing on your mind, for I am sure there is something. I will make a reservation, however, should it happen to be connected with a love affair, as in that case it would be indiscreet on my part to insist on an answer."

"Don't talk such nonsense, Edgar," said Martha, laughing, in spite of herself. "If you must know the truth, it was in a very distant way connected with the subject which was occupying your mind during dinner. I saw, as we were driving home, a number of very drunken-looking men, congregated together at the 'Brickmakers' Arms,' and we afterwards met some others in a road near the house. Two of them were certainly as ill-looking fellows as can be imagined. I assure you I felt quite afraid of them, and so did Fanny. I must completely have astonished Toby at the pace I

drove him home. Don't you think so, Fanny?"

"I certainly do," was Fanny's reply; "for, to speak candidly, you drove at such a rate as to put me in a state of alarm greater than I felt at the sight of the men, ill-looking as they were."

"Well, there is this for your comfort, Martha," said her brother, "rough-looking as these excavators, or navvies, as they are commonly called, are, they are a remarkably hard-working, honest, inoffensive set of men. The only luxury they indulge in is beer, and their only amusement a fight among themselves; for they rarely quarrel with strangers. Now, Martha, as you are fond of missionary work, you may employ yourself with great advantage by mixing a little with their women and children, who are certainly as well worthy of the sympathies of the philanthropist as the natives of Congo, the Gold-coast, Timbuctoo, and other unpleasant localities. You will find among them that the seed will fall on good ground, and uncivilized as they may appear, you will discover in them many of the most beautiful attributes of the Christian religion—patience, long-suffering, charity, and the forgiveness of injuries. What say you, Martha?

If you like to try your hand among them, you may put my name down for ten pounds to assist you."

"I am very much obliged to you, Edgar, both for the suggestion and donation. I have a great mind to make the experiment. It can do no harm, even if it does not succeed."

"I know, Martha," said Edgar, with much feeling in his tone, "no one will be able to do good among them if you do not."

Unfavourably as Martha had been impressed with railway excavators as a class, from the group she had seen assembled in front of the "Brickmakers' Arms," and those she had afterwards met, the suggestion of her brother that she should play the part of a district visitor among their families, pleased her exceedingly. Scarcely had he left the house the next morning, and the chill which usually follows the departure of a respected head of a family from his home had somewhat passed off, than Martha began to form plans for making their acquaintance. In this she felt she should experience but little difficulty. Already she was well known among the few poor families in the neighbour-

hood (principally agricultural labourers) by her kind ministrations in time of sickness, and she rightly imagined through their means she would be able to get acquainted with the new comers.

To say the truth, Martha now wanted some active occupation of the kind. Although she was fully convinced that the figure of her sister Charity which she had seen two evenings before standing by her bedside was merely the result of a waking dream, it had left a singular impression on her mind. More than once the idea forced itself upon her against her better judgment that some misfortune was approaching which it would be her task to avert, but what the coming event which had cast its shadow before it might be, she could not imagine. Still, in spite of herself, the impression remained. She attempted to prove that the imploring look she had seen on Charity's face was the same it wore when she had entered the room to inform her of the singular intimation she had received of her approaching death; but, although she succeeded, again the thought would rise up as pertinaciously as before. She even went so far as to attempt to conjure up some possible sinister

event which might happen to either Walter or his brother; but she could arrive at no conclusion —it would be impossible for any prospects to be fairer or more unclouded than theirs. Finding she could not entirely rid herself of the uneasy impression, she reasonably concluded that, as argument was unable to relieve her, the best plan would be to choose some active occupation which would employ her thoughts in another direction; and now, through the advice of her brother the one was opened to her which would be more likely than any other to produce the desired effect.

That afternoon Martha commenced operations. After taking a somewhat short drive with Fanny, she returned home at an earlier hour than usual. Leaving Fanny at home (there being a serious case of small-pox in the village, and she did not wish to expose her to any danger), Martha started off across the fields by herself, and being a good walker, in the course of half an hour she arrived at her destination. Although the locality was called a village, it was rather a long straggling row of labourers' cottages, with occasionally long gaps between them, the only attributes

of a village being a small general shop, with a few balls of coloured cotton and thread in the window, and some open-mouthed bottles containing common sweetmeats—such as are esteemed by the children of the peasantry, but of which the sight alone is sufficient to create a sensation of nausea to the casual observer not of that class; some paper, pens, and pipes, besides a glass tumbler filled with different coloured marbles, and a few other trifles. The inevitable beer-shop was also there, and a neat though somewhat dilapidated church, where service was held once every Sunday by a curate who lived at least three miles distant, in a direction exactly contrary to the Red House.

On entering the village, the first person Martha met was the parish doctor, a kind-hearted, skilful, and exceedingly hard-worked man. He immediately accosted her, and they entered into conversation. He was a great favourite with Martha, and she frequently conversed with him respecting his patients.

"They are much as usual," was his reply. "Mrs. Jones's rheumatism is somewhat better; and Mrs. Thorold's rather worse. Thompson

has quite recovered from the kick he received from the farmer's horse, and has again gone to his work. I should say that the poor fellow is most grateful for all the kindness you showed him; he and his numerous family would have had a hard time of it, had it not been for your liberality."

"But surely his master also assisted him, did he not?" said Martha. "The accident occurred while he was in his service."

"His master would do nothing for him whatever," was the doctor's reply, "and yet he could well afford it, for he is a wealthy man. He considers that the ten shillings a week which he paid Thompson, and on which he had to maintain an ailing wife and five small children, enough for all accidents and other untoward contingencies which might occur."

"But it appears impossible," said Martha. "Did you call his attention to the man's condition?"

"Although I seldom interfere in cases of the kind," said the doctor, "fearing I might give offence, and make myself enemies with the mammon of iniquity, I did in this case, and received

in reply from the farmer that he paid poor-rates, and considered that amply sufficient."

"And he the poor man's employer!" said Martha.

"Yes; and the more the pity. Had he not been, the law would have obliged him to make the poor fellow compensation. But let me advise you," he continued, "not to visit Mrs. Jackson to-day; another of her daughters has the small-pox."

"How is the elder girl getting on?" inquired Martha.

"Very badly indeed; I am afraid there is no hope for her. I sincerely trust the disease will not spread, or it will be a very serious affair."

"Why so?"

"Because," replied the doctor, "a gang of railway navvies has come to reside in the village, in order to go on with the line. With their wives and children there are at least one hundred and fifty of them. We were crowded enough before, but now it will be something fearful; and if the small-pox spreads, or fever breaks out among them, the mortality will be terrible."

"I want to know something more about them," said Martha. "My brother told me they were about to commence the works, and suggested that I might make myself useful among them."

"You might, indeed," was the doctor's reply. "I can assure you that you will find abundant occupation."

"Do you think they will receive me civilly?"

"On that score you have nothing to fear. They are a rough lot, but not a bad set of fellows, after all. If you wish to see them at their worst you might now, if you were to come with me; but, remember, I do not advise it. You might then experience the truth of what I say. I am going to visit the child of the keeper of the beer-shop, and the taproom through which I must pass is crowded with navvies. I will engage, if you come with me, not one of them will make use of an objectionable expression in your presence, although they are many of them half tipsy, and engaged in getting up a quarrel among themselves."

Martha remained silent for some moments, as if she had a difficulty in making up her mind.

She knew the sick child, a pretty little girl about four years of age, and had often regretted that she was condemned to reside in the pestilential atmosphere—physically and morally—of a beer-shop, where, although her parents were among the most respectable of their calling, her ear would become accustomed to the objectionable language of the tap-room, even if no worse results followed.

"I feel half inclined to go with you," said Martha, at last.

"Just as you please," the doctor replied. "After all, if you intend to visit among the families of these men, you will have seen them at their worst, and as I am certain you will meet with no annoyance from them, it will give you nerve to continue your labours among them. We will go at once, if you please, as my time is getting short."

Martha agreed to accompany him, and they proceeded to the beer-shop. When many yards from it they already heard the sound of noisy altercation going on inside. For the moment she felt somewhat alarmed, but glancing at her companion's face, and noticing the look of in-

difference on it, she took courage and entered the house with him. The tap-room at the time was crowded with the roughest-looking men she had ever seen, all apparently more or less intoxicated. At the time of her entrance they were so much engaged in some dispute among themselves, that they did not notice her or the doctor; but the landlord, who was at the moment behind the bar, immediately came forward to receive them. This caught their attention, and they glanced round and curiously examined the new-comers, but said nothing. The landlord's wife now made her appearance to conduct the doctor and Martha upstairs. As they quitted the tap-room Martha heard one of the men say in a rough tone to the landlord, "Who is she?" Martha did not catch the landlord's reply, who answered the inquiry in a low tone of voice, and the dispute which had been going on at her entrance appeared suddenly to cease, or at any rate was carried on without any noise.

The doctor found his little patient somewhat better, and after he had remained a short time talking to the mother, while Martha chatted with the child, they left the room. On passing

through the tap-room Martha noticed a great change had taken place among the men; they made room for her to pass, and some of them even touched their caps with rude courtesy. One civilly stepped forward to remove a stool out of her way. Martha, on thanking him, noticed, to her great surprise, that he was the gigantic, ruffianly-looking fellow who had so much contributed to cause her alarm the day before. As she was on the point of quitting the house she cast a hasty glance over those assembled, to see if the elderly man, whose appearance had been to her even more objectionable than his companion's, was among them, but he was nowhere to be seen. When they were out of earshot the doctor said to Martha,

"Did you remark the change which had taken place among these fellows while you were in the house? Now I can tell you as well what took place during our stay upstairs as if I had been present with them. I heard—and perhaps you did also—one of them ask the landlord who you were; but although I did not hear his answer, I am certain he told them you were a lady who was very kind to the poor, and they then made

further inquiries about you, all of which were answered in your favour. If you now choose to visit in their families, you will be received with every mark of respect, and be as safe as in your own house. They, in common with all the working classes, treat the medical men with civility, and every lady who has any tact about her, and is bound on a mission of mercy, with profound respect. At the same time, now you have broken the ice, it might be as well not to let them forget you. To-morrow I must be here very early, but the day after I shall call about this time, and if you could meet me then I dare say I shall be able to tell you more about them. I must now beg you to excuse me, as I am behind my time already."

So saying, he took leave of Martha, who promised to meet him as proposed, and she then returned to the Red House.

CHAPTER VII.

AN ALARM.

THE day after Edgar Thornbury left for London, Martha determined to make a pilgrimage to the village where Deborah had died. Anticipating an attack of low spirits from her visit, she did not wish Fanny Keats to accompany her, but found some excuse for her to remain at home; nor did she take the little groom with her, wishing to keep the proceedings of the day a secret to all. As the distance the poor old woman had travelled during her journey on foot was greater than the pony could reach with comfort, and return again the same day, Martha dispatched a note to her friend Mr. Carter, asking him if he could oblige her by obtaining a post-chaise, and have it in readiness at the turnpike gates, where she would meet it about the middle of the day, and leave her own pony

in his charge till she came back. In about an hour the messenger returned, saying that the chaise should be in readiness at Mr. Carter's house at noon. Martha now ordered her own chaise, and at the appointed time went to Mr. Carter's, where she left it in his charge, and proceeded in the post-chaise to the village, which she at last succeeded in reaching. Without much difficulty she found the Quaker shopkeeper, to whom she introduced herself; and then, being invited to enter the little back sitting-room, heard from her a full account of the old servant's sickness and death.

"I believe," said the shopkeeper, "that you already know she left very few articles of clothing. The greater portion she had taken with her when she left home I understand she sold to a woman at whose house she rested on the road. The only thing she left behind, which I have kept out of remembrance of her, is her Bible. If I am not mistaken, from what is written in the fly-leaf, it must have been a present from you. Should you like to see it?"

"I should very much," said Martha, and the woman then left the room to obtain it.

As Martha had anticipated, she found it was the one she had purchased when a girl, to present to Deborah.

"I will let you have it if you wish it," said the shopkeeper; "but I would prefer keeping it, if you've no objection. During the time the poor creature was in my house I had conceived a great respect for her, and should like to keep the Bible as a remembrance."

Martha said she was welcome to keep it, now she had shown it to her. It was another proof, she continued, of the love the good old woman bore her, if, indeed, another were necessary, after the numerous ones she, in common with the rest of the family, had received from her.

The conversation now turned on Deborah's funeral, at which the shopkeeper was the only mourner. Martha asked her if she should have any difficulty in finding the grave.

"I am afraid you would not find it unless I go with you," was her reply, "for as yet no tombstone has been put over it. If you will wait a moment I will put on my bonnet and we will go together."

Martha thankfully accepted the offer, and a

few minutes afterwards they were standing by Deborah's grave, Martha feeling somewhat the same sensation at the time that a Catholic pilgrim might at the shrine of a patron saint. Finding there was a stone-mason in the village, Martha, as she returned, called at his house, and gave him an order to erect a tombstone with a suitable inscription over Deborah's grave. She then went to the inn where she had left the chaise, and returned to Mr. Carter's, where she took possession of her own conveyance, and drove home, not informing anyone at the Red House of the manner in which she had spent the day.

The following morning, when the boy, who was dispatched daily to Mr. Carter's for the letters, returned with the bag, it was found to contain three. One of these was Walter's daily communication to Fanny Keats, and another his weekly one to Martha. Of the former, it would be indiscreet to make any revelations, nor perhaps would they be particularly interesting to the reader, neither would those of his letter to his aunt be any more so. The most important letter was of course Edgar Thornbury's to his wife. After describing his inter-

view with the attorney respecting the compensation he was to receive from the railway directors for his land, and the probabilities there were of their coming to a satisfactory conclusion, he informed her that on the day of his arrival he had found at the office some dispatches from India, containing news which caused him much anxiety—the serious illness of his partner. Should his death occur, it was more than probable he should be obliged to go himself to Calcutta to wind up the estate, as he knew he had been appointed executor; and it would also be necessary to make other business arrangements, as his younger nephew had not sufficient experience to take the management of such important affairs. So great, however, was his aversion to leave England, that he felt almost inclined, in case he received news of the death of his partner, to send Walter Morecombe in his place, although the idea of separating him from Fanny Keats was scarcely less repugnant—if at all—to his feelings than making the journey himself. He should, he added, defer making any definite arrangements for some days; and as the letter he had just received from Calcutta had been de-

layed by some irregularity, he should remain in London for the next mail, which was due the following week, and then communicate further on the subject. All things considered, he did not think it would be worth Mrs. Thornbury's while to make the journey to London, if he returned home during the ensuing week. Still, he said, it would be better for her to be in readiness to start, in case he found his stay in London would be prolonged, or that there was a probability of his leaving England for Calcutta.

It may easily be imagined that when Mrs. Thornbury made known the contents of her husband's letter to Martha and Fanny, the effect produced on them was even more painful than on Mrs. Thornbury herself. She was so tenderly attached to her husband, that as long as she was with him, it mattered little to her whether she remained in England or made the journey to Calcutta. With Martha it was, however, different. She would terribly miss her brother's society, should he make the contemplated journey; and still more would she grieve at the absence of her nephew, whom she loved with a tenderness

which could not be surpassed had he been her own son. As for poor Fanny, she burst into a violent flood of tears, which she in vain endeavoured to restrain. Finding it impossible, she hurried from the breakfast table and sought her own room, where she was soon followed by Martha, who found the poor girl in a state of the greatest distress. Martha endeavoured to console her, and made use of every argument in her power to prove to her the strong probability that Walter would remain in England, as she had no doubt on further consideration his uncle would see the difficulties which would surround so young a man, with such important duties placed on him. He would not only have to act under a warrant of attorney in winding up the deceased partner's estate, but also to arrange the complicated affairs of the business, which would require a man of mature age and business-like qualifications to perform satisfactorily.

In the end, Martha's consolations began to have some influence on the poor girl, while the old maid, seeing the effect she had produced, rightly judged that to give Fanny some mental

occupation wonld be an excellent method of increasing it, and she proposed that they should take a drive together in the morning, so that in the afternoon she might have her brain clearer to write her letter to Walter, while Martha, as she had promised, would keep her appointment with the doctor at the village. Fanny readily agreed to the proposition, and Martha then ordered the pony carriage to be got ready, and as soon as they were prepared for the drive, it came to the door. When they were seated in it, Martha proposed that they should drive to X—, and inform Mr. and Mrs. Keats of the intelligence they had that morning received. To this Fanny at first somewhat demurred, but on Martha's pressing for an answer, she told her she feared it might make both her father and mother uneasy if they heard there was a probability of Walter's leaving England, as they had positively refused to allow her to accept his offer unless it was expressly understood that she should not leave the country.

"But, my dear Fanny," said Martha, "you know that if he takes the journey he will only be absent a few months, or a year at the outside."

"A year!" said Fanny pouting, and with something like indignation in her tone.

"Well, my dear, a year will soon pass, I can assure you. It appears a very small space of time to look back upon."

Fanny might have answered, and with great truth, "But you were never in love, and therefore can form no idea what it would be to be separated for twelve months from your lover." Instead however, she merely remarked, that her papa would very likely imagine that, although Walter might leave England with the idea of returning in twelve months at the latest, circumstances might occur which would necessitate a longer stay; so either the match must be broken off, or he would be obliged to give his consent to his daughter's residing in India.

"Altogether," continued Fanny, "I think it would be much better if we delayed informing papa of it till we hear again from Mr. Thornbury on the subject, for I am certain Walter will do all in his power to avoid leaving England, and his uncle will be cruel indeed if he insists on his going at such a time."

Martha, who had now arrived at the "Brick-

makers' Arms" saw there was some reason in Fanny's objection, and determined they would drive somewhere else. They could, however, form no settled plan, so they merely drove about the country, but in a direction opposite to the village Martha was to visit in the afternoon, and where she had promised to meet the doctor. She called at several labourers' houses as they drove along, making inquiries after the welfare of the different inhabitants. At one house where they stopped, Martha found a poor woman who had lately been confined, whose baby was in a very weakly condition, from inability on the part of the mother to nourish it sufficiently. Martha spoke very kindly to her, and to the wife of an agricultural labourer who was sitting by her bed, and whose husband, out of respect, had left the room when Martha entered it. The tender tone in Martha's voice had the effect of bringing the tears into the invalid's eyes, which Martha noticing, asked her if she was in any sorrow.

"I am indeed, ma'am," replied the woman. "How can I be otherwise? I'm sure I shall lose my poor baby, for I feel I am starving it to

death; and yet it's no fault of mine. I'm pretty well starved myself, and my husband ain't much better. The doctor tells me I must live well and take porter, and how am I to do either one or the other? My husband for a long time has had nothing to do, and only got work last week, and we are already several shillings in arrears at the chandler's shop."

"Well, come, my good soul," said Martha, "tell me how much you owe there."

"It must be at least six shillings, ma'am," the woman replied.

"Well, don't let that annoy you," said Martha, drawing out her purse. "There's half a sovereign for you, and what is over after you have paid the shopkeeper, you may spend in other things for yourself and the baby. When your husband returns from work, tell him to come round to the Red House with a basket, and I will send you back some bottled porter, and some other little things which I daresay will be of service to you. Now keep up your spirits, and I will call to see you again in a few days."

As Martha left the house to return to her pony-chaise, the agricultural labourer, who had over-

heard all the conversation, entered the room.

"Well," he said, "of all the most wonderful changes I ever met with in this world, that woman's the greatest."

"How so?" asked the invalid.

"Why, don't you remember, wife, that that's the old woman who used to sit up all night at the Red House playing at cards with the devil. Why, your poor brother, who is now dead and gone, helped, in company with the parson, to break the house open and snatch her soul from his clutches just as she was upon the point of dying, cheating the devil of his prey after all. I'm sure I often say when I see her driving about, doing good wherever she can, that's a far greater miracle than any of those Romishers, who have lately started in the town, and who crack so much about the miracles done by their saints, can boast of. Ours is the right church after all, and no mistake; and I say that poor woman's a proof of it."

Martha now drove home, and after luncheon was over she started off by herself to meet the doctor in the village, leaving Fanny Keats to write to Walter during the afternoon. The

doctor was true to his appointment, and told Martha that the day before he had made many inquiries respecting the navvies and their families. He found that among them there were eight or ten women, some of whom had husbands, but he believed all, without exception, had children.

"So you see, Miss Thornbury," he continued, "you will have plenty of work before you, both physical and moral. Looking at the question from a medical point of view, they all appear tolerably healthy, and unless fever or small-pox, as I before stated, should break out while they are over-crowded, I do not think there appears much danger of sickness among them. Even the over-crowding is likely soon to be considerably abated, as they are putting up some sheds, on a piece of waste ground close by, for the single men, who at present are crowded together in a most disgraceful manner—married and single all in the same house, without the slightest provision of any kind being made for personal comfort or decency. However, as we are continally told, this is the land of liberty and fine feeling, and therefore every navvy is allowed to

live as he likes. Possibly it is only a matter of taste after all. And now, if you feel disposed, I will introduce you to one or two women whose acquaintance I formed yesterday, one of whom is labouring under an attack of broken head, which she says her husband accidentally did with his fist when drunk the evening I last saw you."

Martha now accompanied the doctor to a miserable cottage outside the village. It consisted but of one room, in which lived an agricultural labourer, his wife and three children, besides a navvy, with his wife and little girl, about five years old. Before entering the house, Martha asked whether the people were in want of money, and whether she could safely leave some with the poor woman, so that her husband could not get at it.

"They are not at all in want of money at present," replied the doctor; "and remember this, never offer them any unless there is an absolute necessity for it. As a rule these navvies are a most thriftless, improvident race. Their wives and children, it is true, frequently suffer great privation, but seldom for more than a few

days together, as the men earn abundance of money, although the greater portion of it is spent at the beer-shop and public-house, which the beneficent legislature allows to spring up almost at the feet of these men as they journey from one place to another. I have frequently known a gang of navvies, when on a job which occupied them for a few months, positively raise to a state of independence the keeper of the beer-shop in their neighbourhood. I should not wonder at all if the keeper of the beer-shop where you visited the sick child with me the day before yesterday, will gain sufficient money before they leave to take and stock a good farm, although hitherto he has had, to my certain knowledge, the greatest difficulty in raising sufficient money to pay the trifling rent of his house. I am fully persuaded that, during the few days these men have been here, the owner of the beer-shop has realized more from them than he did from all his customers together during the whole of the last year."

"You say," said Martha, "the woman we are going to see is suffering from a wound inflicted by her brutal husband. Am I likely to see him?"

"No—the whole gang have gone to work to-day, and he of course is among them. You have not met with any, have you?"

"I do not remember seeing any," said Martha. "Where are they at work?"

"About a quarter of a mile from here. They will return in the evening, and no doubt will behave quietly enough, for I suspect they have very little money left, and will continue orderly until pay-day comes round. The quarrels between the men and women generally occur on those days, the women wishing to get the money for housekeeping from their husbands. Do not imagine, however, that all, or even many among them, are as great ruffians as the husband of this woman we are about to visit. When sober, they are generally very kind to their wives, but, unfortunately, they are far too frequently drunk. Even this woman's husband is not always the brute he proved himself yesterday, and he is strongly attached to his little daughter, tending to prove there is always some redeeming quality in human nature, unless insanity, or the, perhaps, still worse state of mind produced by incessant intoxication, so

completely deadens the natural faculties, that man at last is reduced as low or lower than the brute creation."

Having now arrived at the cottage door, Martha and the doctor entered. The woman of the cottage, who, like most others, was known to Martha, received her with great civility, but the excavator's wife turned her back, as if ashamed to be seen. The children were all absent. Martha immediately addressed herself to the woman she knew, while the doctor advanced to his patient, whom he placed in a chair, and began removing the coarse cotton handkerchief from her head, which she had placed on it to conceal the wounds inflicted by her husband. Martha gave a glance at the woman, and, inexperienced as she was on surgical subjects, she easily perceived the wounds were of a very serious nature. The doctor, finding the dressing he had placed on them the day before did not require removing, readjusted the handkerchief, and then said to her,

"My good soul, you must take care of yourself, and live quietly indoors for a day or two, for you have been very brutally treated. I do

not like interfering in family disputes, but I almost think it my duty to bring your husband's behaviour under the notice of the police."

"Oh! pray don't, sir!" said the woman, her eyes filling with tears. "It wasn't altogether his fault. He was in drink, and I irritated him."

"It ain't true, sir," said the labourer's wife. "She's as gentle a soul as ever God put breath into. Why, the blow he struck her felled her to the ground as a butcher would strike down an ox. My husband said he never saw such a blow—never."

"But why did not your husband interfere?" said Martha, indignantly.

"Lor' bless you, ma'am, what could he do? He ain't a strong man, while her husband is as strong as a horse. He's more like a giant than a man."

"But, my good woman," said the doctor to the excavator's wife, "you certainly ought to apply to a magistrate for protection. I will go with you, if you wish it. Remember, you ought not only to do so for your own sake, but for your child's as well."

"Oh! there's no fear for the child, sir—he treats her kindly enough."

"That may be true, but still he may do her some terrible injury in one of his drunken fits. You had better take my advice."

Both the doctor and Martha, who had now entered into the conversation, endeavoured to show the woman the propriety of applying to a magistrate, but without effect. Seeing all their efforts fruitless, they took leave of her, the other woman accompanying them outside the door. As soon as she thought her lodger could not hear, she said—

"Oh! ma'am, that poor creature has a sad life of it. I'm sorry I ever took the fellow into my house. If it was not for the poor wife, he should never enter it again."

"Why do you not persuade her to apply to a magistrate?" said Martha.

"Well, ma'am, I don't see it would be much use if I did. In the first place, she wouldn't do it, and in the next, if they locked him up, he'd murder her when he came out."

"Is he liked by his mates?" inquired the doctor.

"I don't believe there's one of them that likes him, although they talk and drink with him because he's one of their gang. The only person he's at all friendly with is not a navvy at all."

"Who is he, then?" inquired Martha, anxious to know whether it was the same man she had seen him with the afternoon she first met the excavators, as she had already identified the woman's husband as the more powerful man of the two.

"I don't know at all, ma'am. He don't live in the village, but where he does I can't tell you. I see him hanging about here sometimes, talking with Bill Smithers, and that's all I know about him."

"What sort of man is he?" inquired the doctor.

"As well as I can judge, sir, I should say he's between fifty and sixty years of age. He's very poorly dressed, but don't look like a working man at all."

"Has he long greyish hair?" inquired Martha.

"Yes, ma'am, he has," replied the woman. "He's about the middle height, or a little above it; but I never took any particular notice of

him, beyond that his looks ain't at all in his favour."

"And have you no idea," inquired the doctor, "what he is hanging about here for?"

"No, sir, I can't say at all, except from what I've heard, and that ain't certain."

"Well, tell us what you have heard," said the doctor.

"Well, sir, some say that he wants to start a tommy-shop down by the huts they're building for the navvies outside the village."

"Pray what may a tommy-shop be?" asked the doctor.

"It's a sort of half beer-shop, half chandlers'-shop, that follows the navvies about the country, where they get what things they want."

"I suppose they are generally built by the contractors, who let them out, are they not?" said the doctor.

"Yes, sir, I believe they are," said the woman. "People do say that the old man wants Bill Smithers to join him in renting the huts of the contractors to let out to the men; and a precious nice place it will be if they do."

"Well," said the doctor, "the contractors must

have a higher idea of the eligibility as tenants of Mr. Bill Smithers and his mate than I have. At any rate, I should consider it only a necessary precaution to take a body of police with me whenever I went to collect my rent. However, they know their own business best, and are generally pretty well aware what they are about."

"But I don't mean to say, sir, that they're really going to take the huts and tommy-shop of the contractor. It's only what people say, and may be only talk after all."

The doctor and Martha now left the woman, and made a few other calls on sick people in the village; and then, as time was getting on, Martha bade adieu to her companion, and returned home.

The dinner that day passed off in almost total silence. Martha's mind was too much occupied with the intelligence she had received from her brother in the morning, and the subsequent events of the day, to have any wish to enter into conversation. Fanny, who had written and dispatched her letter to Walter, sat brooding over the danger of being separated for some time from her lover; and Mrs. Thornbury, being some-

what of a taciturn disposition, had not energy enough to attempt to rouse them. After they had quitted the table and entered the drawing-room, the oppression that had hung over them during dinner seemed to increase, till a servant entered the room bringing a note for Fanny. She hastily broke it open, and with an alarmed expression read its contents. It was from her mother, saying that Mary, her youngest daughter, was taken ill, and wishing that Fanny would return home the next day. Of course neither Mrs. Thornbury nor Martha could offer any objection, and a message was sent back to say that Miss Thornbury would drive Miss Keats over early the following morning. The conversation now no longer flagged, although it took somewhat a painful turn, each divining what malady Mary was suffering from, although without the slightest data to go upon, as Mrs. Keats in her letter had merely stated that she was so much indisposed Dr. Wilson had been called in. The evening passed in this manner till it was bed-time, when the only definite conclusion they had arrived at was that as soon as breakfast was over the next morning the pony carriage

should be brought to the door, and Martha and Fanny should immediately start for X——.

Little sleep had either Martha or Fanny that night, and when they rose the next morning they were scarcely more refreshed than when they laid their heads on their pillows the evening before. Poor Fanny seemed especially careworn, and during breakfast scarcely uttered a word. The arrival, however, of the messenger boy with the post-bag restored something like animation in her, and she eagerly broke open the letter from Walter, and was for some time thoroughly absorbed in its contents. When she had concluded she told Martha, with great satisfaction on her countenance, that Walter had had a long conversation with his uncle on the subject of the Indian voyage, and that the latter had assured him, unless something unforeseen occurred, he would not send him to Calcutta, even if the next mail brought the intelligence of his partner's death; and he added that should his uncle go himself, he had promised him (Walter) a lengthened holiday before he started, which he might pass either at the Red House or X——, as best pleased him.

Fanny's spirits were so benefited by this intelligence, that she took leave of Mrs. Thornbury with far more self-possession than would have appeared possible an hour before; and entering the pony-carriage with Martha, they were soon on their road to X——. On their way Fanny chatted incessantly, and appeared in excellent spirits. Even the gloomy prognostications about her sister the evening before had now left her, and she felt convinced that Mary's illness was only a slight attack of bronchitis, to which she was subject, and which she hoped would soon pass away. She now agreed to inform her father and mother of the contents of Mr. Thornbury's letter, especially as the one she had that morning received from Walter had completely neutralized any fears which she might have entertained of the possibility of his being obliged to leave her. In fact, the time occupied by their drive passed off agreeably to both, for even Martha appeared to participate in the satisfaction Walter's letter had given her young friend.

On arriving in the Close, to the great joy of both, Mary Keats was found to be better than

they had anticipated—indeed, so much so, that Mrs. Keats thought it necessary to make some excuse to Martha for the note she sent the previous evening. She informed her that, the morning before, Mary had had a sharp attack of bronchitis, to which she was subject, and that Dr. Wilson, who was called in, appeared from his manner (for Mrs. Keats admitted he had said nothing to alarm them) to consider it more serious than usual. Mary, who was a very nervous girl, immediately after the doctor's departure, begged her mother to write for Fanny, to whom she was much attached, to return home to nurse her; and so urgent were her entreaties, that at last she consented. Thanks to the medicine prescribed by the doctor, Mary was considerably better that morning—so much so, indeed, that it was almost a pity Fanny's anxiety had been raised, and the time of her visit shortened. As she had returned home, however, and her luggage was to follow in the course of the day, Mrs. Keats suggested that she might as well remain, and renew her visit to the Red House on another opportunity.

Although the idea of losing the companion-

ship of Fanny caused some pain to Martha, as the young girl seemed to a certain degree to fill the void caused by the absence of her nephew, Walter, she offered no very strong objection to the proposition of Mrs. Keats. Other elements also entered into the readiness with which she consented to Fanny's remaining with her family. The joy the two sisters showed on meeting raised the remembrance of similar occasions which had transpired between her deceased sister Charity and herself when they were girls; and doubtless had some part in her consenting not to separate them again—for some time at least. Again, she felt that the quietude of the Red House was but ill-suited for the residence of a lively young girl. Since the night when in her waking dream Martha had imagined she saw her sister Charity standing by her bedside, a certain amount of depression had hung over her spirits, similar to that most of us feel, or imagine we do, before a coming misfortune reaches us; which was increased by the incertitude of her brother's movements. She had therefore little inclination for the style of conversation which might amuse her young guest; while the

only occupation she had—that of visiting the sick poor in the village, and her missionary work among the families of the railway excavators—was hardly adapted for Fanny. As before stated, Mrs. Thornbury was exceedingly taciturn, and since the departure of her husband she had become more so. Altogether Martha felt it would be better for Fanny to return when affairs were more settled, and the Red House more lively than it was at that time.

Martha remained with the Keats family till it was time for her to return to dinner. She and Fanny explained to them the intelligence conveyed in Mrs. Thornbury's and Walter's letters, showing in a clear manner how the latter almost completely did away with the unpleasant effect on their minds produced by the former. Mr. Keats also expressed his great gratification at Walter's letter, saying that, although he might have left England with the intention of returning to it again within the twelve months, in all business transactions delays and disappointments were very frequent, and he might have found himself in such a position as to be unable to leave India at the time fixed on. He

had, he said, a very high respect, and even affection, for Walter, but, as he had before stated, he would never give his consent to his daughter marrying a man who would be likely to remove her from England.

To this remark of Mr. Keats, Martha made no further observation than, that she was fully convinced, from what her brother had stated, that Walter would not be obliged to leave England, and therefore it would be bad policy on their parts to anticipate evils which were little likely to arise. The conversation then took another turn, and continued to flow on fluently till it was time for Martha to return to the Red House.

Martha's drive home was without any incident worthy of mention till she had passed the "Brickmakers' Arms," and arrived near the spot where she had the week before met the excavator and his companion, whose appearance had caused her so much apparently causeless fear. Her mind now reverted to them again, and just before passing the place she mechanically turned her head towards it, when to her surprise, and even alarm, she saw, half concealed by a tree by the road-side, the ill-looking man whom she had

seen in company with the excavators, and who was now evidently watching her attentively. When she had reached within a few yards of him, he suddenly sprang forward and placed out his hand as if to seize the pony's head. Martha, now in the extremity of fear, lashed her pony severely, and it started off at a round gallop. She was soon out of reach of the man; nor did she slacken her pace till she had arrived at the Red House, which she reached in almost as breathless a state from her fright as her pony was in from his exertion. The alarm and excitement on Martha's coutenance was noticed by the lodge-keeper's wife when she opened the gates. So great was the curiosity and anxiety expressed on the woman's face to ascertain what had happened, that Martha noticed it, and hurriedly asked if she had seen any ill-looking man about there lately? "I have just met one," she continued, "whom I saw in the lane the other day. He attempted to seize the pony's reins and stop me, but I drove on rapidly and escaped him."

"What sort of a man was he, ma'am?" asked the lodge-keeper's wife.

"I can hardly tell you," said Martha, "for to-day I was too much frightened to take any notice of him, beyond that he appeared somewhat elderly."

"Then it's the same man," replied the woman. "He's been hanging about here for some days past; and my husband has seen him too, and says he's fully convinced he's a bad character. However, when the mounted policeman comes round, which he'll do about eight o'clock in the evening, I'll tell him, and I've no doubt he'll keep a sharp look upon the fellow. As it is, ma'am, don't alarm yourself any further," she continued, for Martha was a great favourite of hers, "he'll not dare to make his appearance in the grounds, I'll warrant."

Little conversation passed that day at the dinner table on any other subject than the alarm Martha had met with. In the course of the evening the mounted policeman, who was stopped on his round by the woman at the lodge, arrived at the house and requested to see Miss Thornbury. He told her what he had heard, and asked Martha the particulars of her adventure, and especially whether the man had used any threats towards her.

"I cannot say he did," replied Martha. "All I have to complain of is the sudden manner he leaped from the side of the bank and attempted to seize my pony's head."

"Can you describe him to me, ma'am?" inquired the policeman.

"Hardly," said Martha, "except that he appeared to be elderly, and not like a regular working man. I was too much alarmed, however, to take particular notice of his appearance."

"I've no doubt it's the same man," said the policeman. "There's been a fellow hanging about here for some days past, and nobody can make out who or what he is. He makes his appearance one day, and disappears again the next, and they don't see him for some time, and nobody knows where he goes to. At the same time I must admit that this is the first complaint we have heard of him, and if I meet him I think it most probable it will be the last."

"How so?" inquired Martha.

"Because I shall tell him that it's your intention to take out a summons against him; and if he's the character I suspect him to be, he won't stop here long after that."

The policeman then left the house, and mounting his horse rode off. Martha passed the remainder of the evening in conversation with Mrs. Thornbury, the subject as before being the danger Martha had been in, and the necessity for the police doing their duty in a more efficient manner.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE SHADOW OF A COMING EVENT.

THE next five days passed over the heads of the family at the Red House in a very dull and wearisome manner. Martha, who was most anxious to know what intelligence her brother's letter would convey to them after the arrival of the Indian mail, had little spirit for conversation, and Mrs. Thornbury seemed to mix with her accustomed taciturnity a considerable amount of nervous anxiety, showing itself, however, far more in her movements than in the remarks she made. In fact the silence which now reigned in the house was almost as profound as that which existed in it when Martha and Deborah were its only occupants. Possibly this also had its effect on Martha's spirits, by reminding her of that sad time, although there was little else to recall it to her memory. Even the servants

seemed to have caught, to a certain degree, the silence which they noticed reigned in the parlours. A feeling almost of depression seemed to hang over them when they waited at table, or performed the ordinary duties of the house. Cooper, Martha's own maid, was also silent in the presence of her mistress, though generally most communicative, informing Martha of the somewhat uninteresting news of the establishment, and neighbourhood immediately surrounding the house, as she not unfrequently acted as her almoner to the poor near at hand.

The only occupation from which Martha derived any pleasure during the time was in twice visiting Fanny Keats, and her ministrations at the village. Mary, she found, had rapidly recovered from her attack of bronchitis; indeed so completely, that Mrs. Keats, on the occasion of Martha's second visit, finding her looking somewhat depressed, actually proposed Fanny's returning with her. To this, however, Martha answered that she thought it would be better if Fanny delayed her visit till after Edgar Thornbury's return, or at any rate till they had received a report of the news brought by the ex-

pected mail from India, as the house was so dull, she was afraid it might depress Fanny's spirits.

"It was solely from fearing you might be dull that I proposed Fanny should return with you," said Mrs. Keats.

"I am much obliged to you," said Martha, "but I expect we shall hear from my brother in a few days; in fact, he led us to hope it would be the day after to-morrow, and then I trust we shall have our minds more at ease, or at any rate we shall know the worst. It will grieve me very much if he is obliged to leave England, though I should grieve still more were it Walter."

"How does Mrs. Thornbury bear the idea of going to India? I think I understood you to say she would accompany her husband if he went."

"I believe," said Martha, "she would undertake the journey without the slightest dread or hesitation; she has no dislike to the sea, and is an excellent sailor. Besides, she has many friends at Calcutta, whom she would be glad to see again. But apart from all that, notwithstanding her somewhat apathetic manner, I be-

lieve her to be tenderly attached to her husband, and she would go with him anywhere, and at any personal inconvenience."

"It is fortunate for her in that respect that she has no family, otherwise it would be a source of great sorrow to her to leave them behind her, as of course she would not have taken her children with her for so short a time."

"That her having no family is a source of sorrow to her, no doubt," said Martha, "although she never speaks on the subject. But if she had children of her own, it would be greatly to the disadvantage of my two nephews, who in all probability will now be my brother's heirs. He certainly could not love them better were they his own sons."

"How do you get on with the families of the excavators?" asked Fanny. "I hope when I next visit you, you will take me to see them sometimes."

"Oh! I get on very well indeed with them," replied Martha. "I now know almost all their wives and familes, and we are very good friends. At the same time, my dear Fanny, I should hardly take you with me."

"Why not? Are they not civil and respectful to you?" asked Fanny. "It would be very ungrateful if they were not, after all your kindness to them."

"I have no right to accuse them of the slightest intentional want of respect for me, and I am persuaded, in their rough way, they would be equally civil to you. They are, however, as a body, very demoralised, and occasionally they might make use of language in your presence unfit for a young girl to hear. Besides, there have been two cases of small-pox in the village, and I should not like to expose you to the danger of catching the disease."

"Have you seen anything more of the man who frightened you so much the other day?" inquired Mrs. Keats.

"Nothing," said Martha. "The lodge-keeper has made inquiries of the policeman, and he thinks the fellow must have left the neighbourhood, for he can hear nothing more of him. Perhaps he was only a beggar, after all, and intended to ask me for alms."

"You cannot imagine how angry papa was when he heard of his behaviour," said Fanny,

"and perhaps more so from his being himself a Justice of the Peace. Without a moment's hesitation he put on his hat, and started off to the Inspector of Police, to ask if he knew anything of the man."

"And what did the Inspector say?" asked Martha.

"He said he knew the man perfectly well by sight, and believed him to be a bad character, but that he had not before heard any complaint of him. He also told papa that he found he had lived some days in the town, and had slept at a low tramp's lodging-house. The landlord, however, said he knew nothing about him, and that he seemed to be a stranger in this part of the country. On the Inspector asking if he appeared to be a working man, he answered that he did not, and had made no inquiry about work when he lodged with him. If he was a working man, he thought he must be a tailor, or something of the sort, as by his hands he did not appear to have been used to hard labour. However, for your satisfaction, the Inspector told papa this morning that he had made more inquiries about him, but none of his men, either

in the town or the country, had seen or heard anything of him for some days past, and they thought, in all probability, he had found out he was watched, and had gone somewhere else."

"And now, Fanny," said Martha, "let us change the conversation. I suppose you continue to receive your daily letter from Walter? Have you heard any news from him?"

"None whatever," said Fanny—"have you?"

"No; my letter will be due to-morrow, and then I hope to hear something from him of a decided character—though, after all, unless the mail has arrived, I dare say he will have but little to tell. But I see that service is over in the Cathedral, as the congregation are leaving. Has your papa officiated there this morning?"

"Yes, he has," said Fanny, rising from her chair, and going to the window, which commanded a view of the Cathedral. "He is now coming, and will be very pleased to see you. Why cannot you stop and dine with us, or, at any rate, make it your luncheon, for we generally dine now in the middle of the day."

Martha accepted the invitation, and remained with the family during their meal; after which

Fanny accompanied her to make some calls in the neighbourhood, and then they went to a stationer's in the High Street, where Martha wished to purchase some books to present to the village children. Having chosen those she thought appropriate, she turned to leave the shop, when a lad entered, bearing a number of newspapers, which had just arrived by the train. As he threw them on the counter, Martha saw one of the bills usually placed in the front of the shops, indicating the contents of the newspapers, and on casting her eye over it, noticed in large letters the words, "Arrival of the Indian Mail." She immediately purchased a paper, and hurried back to Mr. Keats's, where she read the news with great avidity, but the paper contained nothing of the slightest interest to her. She was certain, however, that the mail had arrived, and she naturally concluded that they would hear from Edgar the next morning. Martha now requested that her pony-chaise might be got ready, as she was anxious to return to Mrs. Thornbury, and tell her the mail had arrived. So bidding adieu to her friends, she started on her road homewards.

The idea of receiving a letter from her husband the next day raised an unusual amount of excitement in the mind of Mrs. Thornbury, and she and Martha talked on the subject until it was time for them to separate for the night. On Martha's part, even when she was in bed she could not sleep, so rapidly did the possible events which might follow the receipt of her brother's letter crowd on her imagination. To do her justice, not a single selfish thought was mixed with them, yet she might readily have been excused had it been otherwise. Probably if Edgar and his wife quitted England she would be left in charge of the Red House during their absence, and the sad reminiscences connected with it might again return during her solitude. True, she might obtain from Mr. Keats permission for Fanny to pay her lengthened visits from time to time, but to take her from the society of her own family to reside in the gloomy atmosphere of the old mansion, with only Martha for a companion, would hardly be fair to the young girl. These and other subjects connected with her own immediate comfort, which would be likely to be impaired

by her brother's absence, might legitimately have come before her, but not for a moment were her thoughts so occupied; while anxiety for the happiness of her brother and nephews haunted her so pertinaciously, as entirely to drive sleep from her pillow.

Both Mrs. Thornbury and Martha rose at an unusually early hour the next morning, and met in the dining-room before the table was prepared for their breakfast, greatly to the astonishment of the servants, for since the departure of Edgar Thornbury, the habitual regularity observed with respect to the time of their meals had greatly deteriorated. The breakfast passed over almost in silence, and as soon as it was concluded they both went into the drawing-room, which commanded a view of the carriage-drive from the lodge gates to the house, by which the messenger boy with the letters would arrive. Each selected a window, and placing herself at it, remained there as silent and immovable as statues, till they espied the lad making his way towards the house.

Both Martha and Mrs. Thornbury now left their positions, and with great alacrity moved

towards the entrance door to receive the bag, which Mrs. Thornbury took, and hastened with it into the dining-room, Martha following her. Mrs. Thornbury's behaviour now offered a proof how often people are led to form an erroneous opinion of others, by judging from external appearance. Although for the last few days she had exhibited a certain amount of excitement, it had displayed itself in a sort of nervous physical irritability, often changing her position or occupation without any assignable cause, while the expression of her countenance remained as placid and immovable as ever. Her behaviour, however, on the arrival of the post bag, clearly proved she was not the impassive creature she generally appeared. Seating herself on the sofa, while Martha stood by her side, she took the key from her pocket and attempted to open the lock. She was unable to accomplish it, so greatly did her hand tremble. Apparently ashamed of the emotion she was shewing, and determined to control it, she made several efforts to place the key in the lock, but without success, the trembling of her hand and her mental agitation appearing to become

greater by the efforts she made to subdue them. At last, finding her attempts ineffectual, she held up the key and bag to Martha, saying as she did so,

"Take it, dear, and open it for me."

Mrs. Thornbury then placed her hand before her eyes, and wept so silently, that Martha was not even aware she was crying, till after she had opened the bag (in which were two letters), and was on the point of offering the one addressed to Mrs. Thornbury to her. She then noticed the big tears falling rapidly beneath the uplifted hand on to Mrs. Thornbury's dress. Seating herself on the sofa, Martha passed her arm round her sister-in-law's waist, and endeavoured to console her, telling her there was a letter from Edgar for her. Mrs. Thornbury now took her hand from before her eyes, and placing it on Martha's, said to her,

"Read it for me, dear, I cannot now do so myself, and yet I want to know the news it contains. I cannot tell what has come over me during the last few days—I suppose I cannot be well. There will be nothing that I anticipate in the letter likely to annoy me or cause

me any uneasiness, and yet I feel as if some great sorrow was hanging over me. Read it, dear, and let me know what Edgar says, unless you wish to read your own first," she continued, noticing that Martha held another letter in her hand, "and in that case I will wait till you have finished."

"Oh! no, dear," said Martha, placing her own letter aside, and breaking the seal of the one addressed to her sister-in-law. "Mine can very easily remain till I have read yours. It is only from Walter, and I daresay the most important part in it will be but a repetition of the news from my brother."

Martha now commenced reading Edgar's letter, in which he told his wife that the Indian mail had arrived, bringing with it a letter from the Calcutta branch, announcing the death of Mr. Sigmond, the senior partner, who was an old bachelor; besides another from the solicitor, confirming the intelligence. The latter gentleman sent a copy of Mr. Sigmond's will, in which, as Edgar had anticipated, he was not only left executor, but after devising that the sum of ten thousand pounds should be left to the firm,

one thousand each to Walter and his brother, and some other legacies, he (Edgar) was to be the residuary legatee.

"What will be the value of the residue," Edgar's letter continued, "it would be impossible to state, so much depending on what the assets would realize; but it will certainly not be less than sixty thousand pounds. At the same time, I find it imperative that I should make the voyage to Calcutta. Not only shall I be wanted there to put the firm in working order, and make preparations for establishing the London branch as head-quarters; but I particularly wish to superintend the realization of the assets comprised in the residue of Mr. Sigmond's estate. I know too well how much loss accrues in India in transactions of the kind, and how difficult it is to obtain redress afterwards; so, all things considered, my dear wife, I trust you will agree with me, that I ought to make the voyage. As to your accompanying me, I will leave it to your own discretion. That I should like to have you with me, you may readily imagine; but whether, as I hope to return in six or eight months, you may think it

worth while to undergo the discomforts and annoyances of the voyage, I will leave entirely for you to decide. Think it well over, but do not come to a conclusion till you see me, which I trust will be to-morrow. I do not know by what train I shall arrive—most probably by one in the afternoon, so the better plan would be to let the lad drive over Martha's pony-chaise to X——, and leave it at the 'White Hart,' and then return on foot, as I don't like him idling about the town or spending his time in a public-house.

"I do not know how long I may remain with Mr. Keats," Edgar's letter went on, "but very probably for some hours, as I wish to speak to him about many things. In the first place, I wish to tell him that it is now my intention gradually to retire from business, and leave my two nephews in the firm; and that they may not be in any manner crippled for want of capital, I intend letting £10,000 of my own remain in the business, which, with the same amount left by Mr. Sigmond, will leave them floating capital enough to carry on a very considerable trade. There is also another point I wish to

consult Mr. Keats upon. Walter is not entitled by law to bear his unworthy father's name, and I am sure you will agree with me that it would tend far more to the respectability of the family if he dropped it altogether, and assumed that of Thornbury; and this, as I purpose submitting to Mr. Keats, may be accomplished without raising any scandal, as I intend making Walter and his brother my heirs. If he (Mr. Keats) has no objection, I will take the proper steps for Walter henceforth to bear the name and arms of Thornbury. I do not know by what process it should be done—I suppose by the heralds' college; but as Keats is much better up on subjects of the kind than I am, he perhaps may be able to advise me. How long it will take to get matters properly arranged, I know not; but in the herald's college, as well as most other places, I have no doubt money will be able to facilitate matters, and I trust that all will be accomplished before I leave England, and that my ears will never again be offended by hearing Walter called by his present name. I have several other subjects I wish to speak to Keats about, so you may easily perceive it will be

impossible for me to say at what time I shall return; but at any rate you may be sure of seeing me in the course of the evening.

"I am afraid, Martha," said Mrs. Thornbury, drying her eyes, "you must think me very foolish."

"Why so?" inquired Martha.

"To give way in the unreasonable manner I did. Instead of having any cause to complain, I ought to be thankful. We are indeed fortunate. I had an impression over me, that some sorrow was in store for me, and instead I receive only good news."

"I cannot blame you, Marguerite," said Martha, "for a similar impression has for some days been hanging over me, without more reason for it than you had. But it's all over now, and you have nothing to do but make up your mind whether you will accompany Edgar to India, though I would not do so in a hurry, if I were you. It will be better to talk the matter over with him when he returns."

"My mind is already made up," said Mrs. Thornbury. "I will go with him, short as his stay may be in Calcutta. I do not fear the

voyage, and even if I did, that would make no difference with me. Things must be bad indeed when I could not be happy in his society. But I am very selfish, Martha," she continued, "to keep you talking to me without giving you time to read your own letter. Pray do so at once."

Martha now opened Walter's letter, which in great part was filled with the same news as that contained in Edgar Thornbury's. Beyond it, he merely stated that as his uncle would not start for India before three weeks had elapsed, he had promised when he returned from the Red House to give him a fortnight's holiday, which he would pass with his aunt, omitting to state his intention of spending each day with Fanny Keats in X——, in case his aunt's strict notions of propriety should prevent her inviting Fanny to pay her a visit at the Red House during his stay. With this exception, and a request to Martha to find out for him, if possible, what the particular conversation was about which his uncle wished to have with Mr. Keats on his arrival in X——, there was nothing more of any interest to the reader than has been already stated in Edgar's letter.

"And now," said Martha, when she had finished reading her letter, "I will write to Walter."

"Why not do so in the afternoon?" inquired Mrs. Thornbury. "The boy will not call for the letters till four o'clock, and you will have plenty of time before then."

"It is my day for visiting at the village," replied Martha. "I would willingly put it off, for my mind is occupied about other things, only I have promised some of the children to take them some picture-books which I purchased yesterday when I was in the town, and they would be terribly disappointed if I did not go. But if you wish me to stop and keep you company, Marguerite, I will willingly do so."

"No, dear," said Mrs. Thornbury, "if you have promised the children, I will not detain you. I wish I had your spirits and nerve for an occupation of the kind, but I am afraid the lassitude which we all more or less feel in India has followed me here. Go on with your letter at once, and while you are writing it, perhaps something may strike me I should like to talk to you about."

Martha now seated herself at her davenport, and commenced writing her letter to Walter. Beyond her expressions of affection for the young fellow, the materials for her letter were meagre in the extreme. They comprised simply congratulations on the legacy he had inherited, his fortunate escape from being obliged to take the voyage to India, her own visits to Fanny Keats since she had last written, a description of the picture-books she was about to present to the children, and an account of her ministrations in the village. Nevertheless, with the facility of an old maid for letter-writing, she managed not only to fill two sheets of note-paper, but to cross a considerable portion of them as well.

While she was thus occupied, Mrs. Thornbury employed herself in reading over her husband's letter, which Martha had left on the sofa, and which she now did without difficulty, and with great interest. When Martha's letter was completed, Mrs. Thornbury again took up the conversation about her contemplated journey to India, talking with much interest of the different friends she had left there, and the pleasure it

would give her to see them again, although the duration of her visit would be but short.

"So far Martha," she continued, "from having any objection to accompany Edgar, I begin to look upon the prospect of doing so with positive pleasure. Do not imagine though that I shall quit you without regret, but, to speak candidly, you and Fanny Keats are the only persons in England I have any affection for. All others I have met with seem so cold and artificial. Whatever may be the faults of Indian society, there is a great deal more kindness and good feeling among us as a rule, than can be found in England."

"I have always heard," said Martha, "that the English are much more friendly to one another when living abroad, than in their own country. But do not let the charms of Indian society induce you to remain there. It would be a terrible grief to me if I thought you and Edgar were likely to remain, or even make any lengthened stay."

"There is no fear of that, Martha," said Mrs. Thornbury. "Even if I should wish to remain, Edgar is too much attached to England to stay

away a day longer than is absolutely necessary for him to transact the business he is going upon."

In this manner the conversation continued till luncheon was ready, and shortly afterwards Martha left the house to visit her protegées in the village, taking with her the presents she had purchased for the children.

When Martha reached the village, she found her friend the doctor had not yet arrived. The first visit she paid was to the house of the poor girl who had been stricken with the small pox. Fortunately, the doctor's augury that the girl would die under the attack proved erroneous, for although there was every probability of her face remaining scarred for life, she was already sufficiently recovered as to have reached a state of convalescence. Even her sister was much better; indeed there was every reason to believe the disease would in her case leave no mark behind, the attack having been a very slight one. After remaining some time in the cottage conversing with the invalids and their mother, Martha made them a little present in money, and then visited a small dame school she had

established. She remained for some time talking with the pupils, many of whom were the children of the excavators employed on the railway works, giving the prizes she had promised to the most diligent among them, and speaking words of encouragement to the others. To her great annoyance, however, she did not find among them the child of the brutal Bill Smithers, and heard with sorrow that her father had prohibited her attending, under the plea that he had done very well without learning himself, and he did not see why his child could not do the same, without bothering her brains with books or any other humbug of the kind. Martha, however, was determined to make another attempt to get the child, young as she was, to attend the school, and reserving one of the little books she had brought with her, which contained the gaudiest pictures of the whole, she left the school-room to visit her at her home. On the road she met the doctor, who at that moment had arrived.

"Busy in your good work, Miss Thornbury, I see," he said to her. "Go on with it, for I can assure you, from what I have myself seen, great benefit has already resulted from your labours.

Already a marked improvement in cleanliness and order is perceptible among the wives of the navvies, and I do not speak without good data to go upon. As a medical man I have good opportunities of judging, as you may easily imagine. Your school too works well, and the children have much improved under Mrs. Watts, aided by your kind superintendence."

"I am pleased to hear you say so," said Martha, "though at the same time I am sorry to say one of the little pupils, in whom I take great interest, has left the school."

"Indeed," said the doctor, "whose child is it?"

"The daughter of the woman who was so badly treated by her husband. I understand, however, it was not the mother's fault, she would willingly let the child attend, but her husband will not allow it."

"Well," said the doctor, "I suppose it cannot be helped. He is a great ruffian, and if he has objected, there will be but little probability of getting him to change his mind."

"I am afraid so too," said Martha, "but I am determined not to give up all hope till I have

made the attempt. I have contrived to gain the confidence of the mother, and I hope to get her to stand my friend."

"It will be of little use," said the doctor, "the only effect her interference will produce will be to get herself well abused, if not brutally assaulted."

"I don't despair though," said Martha; "I understand he is very fond of the child, and I have brought a present for her, which I hope will please him also." And she showed the doctor a picture-book she had with her.

"That it will please both mother and child, I have no doubt," said the doctor, examining the book; "but I don't think it will have much effect on the father. His ideas of female training are somewhat eccentric. He wanted, I understand, to take a little dilapidated wooden doll from her which her mother had given her, and for which she entertained a great affection. The child, however, objected, and as he never does anything to offend her, he determined to try 'moral suasion' instead. He procured a hideous bull pup, which he gave to her, and told her to nurse it instead of the doll.

Like most children, the little thing is fond of dumb animals, and took to the puppy readily enough, but still retained her affection for the doll, and, to the great disgust of the woman who owns the cottage, the child insisted on both the doll and the pup being her bedfellows. So, from that little but very characteristic anecdote of the worthy gentleman, you may imagine you have a somewhat difficult task before you."

"Are you going to the cottage?" inquired Martha.

"No, I am not," replied the doctor. "There is no necessity for it, and my time is too much occupied to pay a visit without. Besides, it is bad policy for a parish doctor to visit in a house where he is not absolutely wanted. The poor, and especially the women, are very apt to imagine themselves ill when there is little or nothing the matter with them; so I abstain as much as possible making myself too cheap among them."

The doctor now quitted Martha to make his round of visits to the parish patients, leaving her to proceed to the cottage alone. When

she had almost arrived at the door, she heard the sound of laughter within, and, somewhat to her annoyance, from the coarse shouts mingled with it, one of the party was a man—probably the ruffianly navvy himself. On entering, Martha found her conjecture was a correct one. The fellow was seated on one of the beds, laughing boisterously at some game he was carrying on with his little girl, and evidently in high good-humour. His wife was also there, and appeared to be taking part in the amusement, while the other children, belonging to the woman of the cottage, were watching the proceedings with great interest, though their mother sat silent, and somewhat sullenly by the other bed, as if disgusted with the whole affair. So interested was Bill Smithers in his amusement, that he did not notice Martha's entrance into the cottage, so that she had a moment's leisure to ascertain the game they were playing at. It was simple in the extreme. Bill Smithers was teaching his little girl how to set the bull pup at her mother, who, by way of pleasing them both, was holding out her gown to be bitten, while the child, instructed by the father, was

clapping its little hands to encourage the puppy in its attack.

At the particular moment of Martha's entrance, the interest of the game was at the highest. The dog, instead of seizing the gown which was held out, flew at the woman's leg, and fastening its teeth in it with the tenacity of its race, refused to quit its hold, in spite of her endeavours to release herself, her husband the while roaring with delight, as the child encouraged the dog to keep its hold by patting it on its back. Fortunately the creature was too young for its teeth to do any harm, and the woman, though trying to release herself, could hardly refrain from joining in the merriment.

The first to notice Martha's presence was the child, who, great as was the interest she felt in setting the dog at her mother, had greater in Martha, and advanced to meet her, holding up her cheek to be kissed. The man, noticing his child's movements, also turned round, and seeing Martha, he first took the dog from his wife's leg with a grip that almost strangled it, and then, rising from his seat, stood silently waiting

for the visitor to speak. Martha came towards him, and opening the little picture-book she had brought, said, with much kindness in her tone,

"This is a present for my little friend—I hope you will let her accept it."

Giving a glance at the book, Bill Smithers answered—

"Well, ma'am, I'm much obliged to you all the same, but I don't see much use it'll be to her. You see, I can't read myself, and don't like my darter to read anything without my knowing if it's good for her." This he uttered with a peculiar grim satirical smile upon his face. "I daresay it's all very right and proper, at the same time it might be given to somebody else who'd take a fancy to it, instead of leaving it here with those who don't care about it. So if it's all the same to you, ma'am, I'd as soon not have it."

The child, however, seemed to be of a different opinion, for she had already taken the book from Martha's hand, and was turning over its leaves with great interest, which the other children, who were looking also at it, seemed to

share. Bill now stooped down to take the book from the child, but the spirit of her father was strong within her, and she would not let it go. He, apparently ashamed to be thwarted by his child in the presence of a stranger, attempted with more force to take it from her, but the girl with a spirit worthy of the puppy with which he had presented her, not only retained her grasp on the book, but fixed her teeth on her father's hand. The puppy, noticing its little mistress, evidently thought it a duty incumbent on it to assist her, and flew at Bill's leg, vainly endeavouring to get its teeth through his coarse leather boots. So far from being displeased with the behaviour of the child and her dog, Bill seemed to regard them with feelings of satisfaction and pride, and quitting his hold of the book with a hand almost the size of a dinner plate, he patted the child on the head, and told her he liked her pluck, and she might keep the book for the lady's sake. Then, by way of benediction to the dog, he gave it a kick which sent it from one side of the cottage to the other, and turning to Martha, said to her,

"You see, ma'am, I'm willing to oblige every-

body. The child may keep the book for your sake."

"Well, then," said Martha, assuming more kindness in her tone than she felt at her heart, for she was greatly disgusted at his brutality to the dog, "since you are kind enough to allow her to keep the book, I hope you will do more, and allow her to attend the school."

Bill was evidently on the point of giving some very explicit refusal to Martha's request, when his wife said,

"Oh! you're very kind, ma'am, but it's no use now, we're going away from here to-morrow, and it ain't likely we shall come back again. My husband has got work about thirty miles off."

"Well," said Martha, "if you do go, I sincerely hope you will let the child go to school; it will do her good both here and hereafter."

Here Martha noticed Bill make a most expressive grimace, indicative of disgust and ridicule, and justly thinking she could do no further good by waiting longer with them, she kissed the child, and wishing the parents good morning, left the cottage, followed by the woman to whom it belonged.

As soon as the woman had closed the door after them, Martha asked her if it was true her lodgers intended leaving the neighbourhood the next day.

"It's quite true, ma'am," she replied, "at least so they tell me now, and if he's sober enough to walk when to-morrow comes, I dare say he'll keep his word."

"What is the reason of his leaving?" inquired Martha.

"He says it's because he's got work somewhere else, but I don't believe it. The fact is, he's so hated by all the other navvies, they won't let him remain with them, and they are a set of people when once they make up their minds to a thing they generally keep to it. The happiest time of my life will be when I see the backs of them."

CHAPTER IX.

MARTHA MEETS AN OLD ACQUAINTANCE.

IT was getting late in the afternoon when Martha left the village to return home. For some little distance her way lay across open fields, after which she had to pass through a narrow lane, which terminated in the meadows attached to the home farm of the Red House.

She had proceeded about half-way up the lane, deeply absorbed in thinking over the lamentable future in store for the poor child she had just quitted, when a man leaped from the hedge a short distance in advance of her, and standing in the centre of the pathway, waited for her to approach him. At a glance Martha saw it was the navvy's companion, who had attempted some days before to seize her pony's head as she was returning home from X——. Both terrified and surprised at his appearance,

Martha stopped, as if doubtful whether to proceed or return. The man, seeing her indecision, advanced towards her, and taking his slouched hat from his head, so that she might see his features more fully, said to her,

"Why, Martha, old girl, don't you know me?"

Though in dress and features he was much altered from when she had last seen him in the prison cell, the tone of voice immediately recalled him to her memory. The unworthy father of Walter Morecombe now stood before her. Recovering her self-possession with wonderful rapidity—probably stimulated by the intense aversion she held him in—Martha said with much severity in her tone,

"Mr. Morecombe, I will thank you to let me pass, and remember for the future we are total strangers to each other."

"Martha, my dear, you are totally in error," he said, in a perfectly calm though somewhat satirical tone of voice. "That we may have been strangers to each other for some time past is possible, but we will be so no longer. There must be two parties to every bargain, and in this I refuse to hold you as a stranger, but for

the future shall consider you as my dear and well-beloved sister. Oh! it's no use your assuming that dignified mien," he continued, laughing, as Martha motioned him aside with her hand to let her pass. "Martha, you must hear me."

"You can have nothing to say to me, sir, which I should wish to hear!" she said, indignantly.

"Very possibly," he said, in the same cool, calm, irritating tone. "But I have a great deal I wish to tell you, Martha, and hear it you must and shall. You see, my dear, I can take as authoritative a tone as you can when it pleases me. But after all, Martha, why should you oblige me to use both tone and language so contrary to my wish? Really you're treating me very unkindly. Now, like a good soul as you are, hear what I have to say, and then take what steps you consider most advisable afterwards. For my own part," he continued, with a malicious grin on his countenance, "when you have heard me to the end I am sure you will love me with the same sisterly affection you did formerly."

Finding that Morecombe still hindered her from passing, and resolving if possible not to

reply to him, she looked round to see if there was anyone advancing from behind to whom she might apply for assistance.

"No use, Martha," he said to her, laughing; "there is no one likely to come, nor is there a policeman within five miles of us at the present moment. By-the-bye, let me thank you for your kind solicitude on my behalf in calling the attention of the police to my residence in the neighbourhood. I should have thought the favourable character you had received from them of me might have been a sufficient guarantee to you of the respectability of my present mode of life. I have done nothing here to cause you to be ashamed of your relationship with me. You see I'm tolerably well advised how matters are going on, Martha."

"Mr. Morecombe," said Martha, "once more I request you will allow me to pass. If you have any communication to make to me do it in writing, for I wish to hold no conversation with you."

"I am exceedingly obliged to you for the suggestion, Martha. It is a proof that I have made a step in advance in your good opinion. At the same time, I don't like writing—in fact,

the result of my experience is that my skill in writing has done me more harm than good, which I may prove to you on another occasion, for it would occupy too much time at present. But let us compromise the matter, Martha. If you wish it I will let you pass now without further impediment, and to-morrow I will do myself the pleasure of calling on you at the Red House. As I have no visiting-cards about me, I will send in my name by the servant, and request that I may have an interview with my dear sister Martha."

Martha now began to be fairly terrified. Objectionable as any conversation would be with him at the moment, it would be infinitely better than to allow him to call at the Red House.

"If you have anything you wish particularly to say to me, Mr. Morecombe," said Martha, "say it at once, and then let all be finished between us. It will be much safer for you also than to call at the Red House, for I can assure you my brother is not of a disposition to allow me to be annoyed with impunity."

"Possibly not, Martha; and were he at home when I called—which, by-the-bye, there is no

probability of, as he is now in London—I have no doubt he would have me ignominiously turned out of the house. I am obliged to you, Martha, for the care you evidently have of my personal safety. But what I have to say to you is short and explicit in the extreme. Martha, I am in distress, and in urgent want of money, and as I know you have it, I trust you will assist me."

"I will not give you one farthing, sir," said Martha, sternly. "How can you have the assurance to apply to me for it, after your treatment of my poor sister."

"Martha, to whom can I apply, if not to you?" he said. "If we can't look to those of our family to assist us, what right have we to look to strangers? Once more I want money, and you must and shall give it me."

"Do you attempt to threaten me, sir?" said Martha.

"Consider my behaviour in any light you think fit," he said; "but, Martha, I must have some money, so it's no use talking longer about it."

"Well, sir," said Martha, "of course I can

enter into no struggle with you on the subject, but shall yield at once to your threats. Take what little money I have," she continued, drawing her purse from her pocket, "and allow me to pass on."

Instead of taking the purse, Morecombe looked sternly and thoughtfully in her face for some moments, and then said, in the cynical tone he had hitherto been speaking in,

"My dear Martha, I don't like that word 'threats' you make use of. I wish to use no threats. On the contrary, I hope the same brotherly and sisterly affection which formerly existed between us will be renewed, and that what you give me will be given from the fulness of your heart. Besides, you are too intimate with the police force to allow me to accept anything from you which by any possibility you can say I obtained by threats. Martha, dear, I begin to suspect there is a good deal more of the lawyer about you than I thought for. No, my dear, pray keep your purse. I will wait till your brother returns from London, and then, at all risks, call and see him at the Red House, and explain to him my urgent necessities. Possibly,

if only to conceal the relationship between us, he may assist me; but in the interim, as I am at present completely at low-water mark (in fact, I have hardly enough to pay for a night's lodging), I will return to X——, and introduce myself to my future dear daughter-in-law, and her family, and, telling them the unpleasant circumstances in which I at present find myself, beg of them to assist me." So saying, he turned round, as if to quit Martha, who, terribly alarmed, now called to him to stop.

"You surely, sir, would not be so base," she said to him, "as to disgrace us all by informing that poor girl that you are the father of her future husband? You, a man who has been imprisoned for his misdeeds, and are now a released criminal."

"Martha, my dear," he said, advancing to her, and addressing her with great coolness, "if you imagine my power of annoyance is comprised solely in my reputation as a bigamist who has undergone imprisonment for his fault, you do me a singular injustice. I will not detain you with the history of my career since we last met, beyond saying that after having, through my

imprisonment, received absolution for my amiable fault in marrying your sister, having another wife living at the time, I determined to rush back like a dove to the ark, as our old friend Deborah would have called it, to be received again into the bosom of your family. But I found, Martha, that you had very little money, and not wishing to deprive you of the pleasure of maintaining my two sons, I thought it better not to disturb you. I attempted to enter into business, and tried more than one speculation, but things went badly. In fact, I purchased some goods, and gave a bill accepted by a highly respectable tradesman, and which would be due in two months, for the money, intending, by the sale of the goods, to leave England and start in business in America. Before my departure, however, I got arrested, and on engaging an attorney, to my intense surprise he candidly told me he was afraid the Court might consider it a case of embezzlement. He was in error, however, on the subject, for on going further into the matter, the law considered it a case of forgery—the tradesman whose name was at the back of the bill denying all knowledge of the

transaction. Well, Martha, the result was that I got sent to Van Diemen's Land, where I was set to work with the chain gang. More than once while there I got into trouble. With the hatred of despotism peculiar to the English race, I twice attempted to escape, for which I was each time flogged, and had heavier irons put upon my legs, See here," he continued, putting his foot on the stump of a tree, and pulling up his trousers above the ankle, "I wouldn't deceive you, there's the mark of the iron upon my leg, and only that it would offend your delicacy, I might show you the mark of the cat upon my shoulder. You see, then, my powers of annoyance are, I may say, irresistible."

"And what benefit will it be to you," said Martha, the tears coming into her eyes, "to degrade your poor son by calling on Mr. Keats? Why should you injure your own child, who has given you no offence?"

"Martha," he said sternly, and noticing her gathering tears, "what right have you to consider that the relationship—no matter in what light—between a father and his son can be derogatory? Possibly," he continued, glancing

furiously at her, "you may have taught him to hate me, and if so I know what steps to take. If I receive no assistance from Mr. Keats, I will immediately start for London; and as I have found out since I have been here where my son is employed, I will call on him there, and proclaim my relationship with him. Nay, more, I will follow him on 'Change, and wherever he goes, telling every one with whom he is acquainted that I am his father."

"You cannot be such a villain," said Martha, now bursting into tears, "as to ruin your own innocent son. Have you not done mischief enough to us already? You broke my poor sister's heart, and you brought my father's grey hairs with sorrow to the grave. By your dishonesty you deprived my poor mother in her last years of the bare necessaries of life, and now, unless we again put ourselves in your power, you threaten to destroy the happiness and welfare of your child, by degrading him in the eyes of the family he is about to marry into, as well as ruining his respectability as a merchant. Say no more—you have conquered. Let me know what money you want, and you shall have it if I can supply you."

Morecombe looked at her thoughtfully for a moment, as if deliberating what sum he should ask.

"A hundred pounds would serve at present, Martha; but that sum I must and will have."

"I have not more than fifty in the house," was Martha's reply; "nor shall I be able to obtain more till my brother arrives."

"That's unfortunate," said Morecombe, considering deeply. "When do you expect him?"

"To-morrow."

"Can you get a cheque for the balance from him to-morrow?" inquired Morecombe.

"No, I do not think there is any probability of it," said Martha. "He will not arrive till late at night. But I promise you shall have it the next day, on the sole condition, however, that you leave this neighbourhood, and offer no annoyance to Walter."

"Dear Martha," said Morecombe, laying his hand on his heart, and again assuming his cynical tone, "on the honour of a gentleman, I will obey your commands to the letter." Then, noticing an expression of disgust on Martha's countenance, he continued, "Nay, my dear,

you're unreasonable. What else am I to say? I would take my affidavit, if you liked; but I don't suppose you would consider that worth much. But now, Martha, when am I to have the money?"

"It is too late this evening," said Martha—"to-morrow."

"To-morrow be it then," said Morecombe. "I will not trouble you for any to-night. It might have the appearance of your yielding it unwillingly, and that I don't wish. Meet me here to-morrow at noon, and have the money enclosed in an envelope, with a mere line inside, saying that you present it to me. I don't doubt your honour, Martha, at the same time I like to be on the safe side of the hedge. Now, good-bye, and don't fail to keep your appointment. I feel we shall be excellent friends after all."

Before taking up the thread of our narrative, it will be necessary to dedicate a few pages to the adventures of Mr. Morecombe since his release from prison, after his conviction for bigamy, as well as the way in which he made the acquaintance of Bill Smithers. There is but

little more in Morecombe's history which it will be necessary to relate, than that which he mentioned in his conversation with Martha as she was returning from the village, and that little would tend rather to increase the infamy of his character than to relieve it.

On quitting the prison, his first idea was to attempt the renewal of his acquaintance with Mr. Thornbury, and to apply to him for assistance. That such a course might be useless was probable, still Morecombe determined to try it. He had, he considered, the weapons in his power. In the first place, he calculated on Mr. Thornbury's natural weakness of character, now fearfully increased by sorrow, age, and infirmity. He had concocted a specious tale—how, when scarcely of age, he had been entrapped into a marriage by a profligate woman many years his senior—how she had quitted him when she had spent the fortune he had inherited, to live with her former paramour. He had also, preparatory to his anticipated interview with Mr. Thornbury, forged a letter, which he intended stating he had received from America, describing the decease of his first wife, pathetically narrating

her death-bed repentance, and conveying to him her earnest hope of forgiveness. That after his marriage with Charity, he had found out it was not only false, but that the tale had only been invented to allow him to contract a second marriage, and then, under the threat of exposing the former, to obtain money from him at her pleasure. He acknowledged he had fallen into the trap that had been laid for him; and further stated that no inconsiderable portion of the money supposed to have been lost in mercantile speculations had been expended in purchasing the silence of this infamous woman, who, finding he would no longer submit to her extortions, had at last informed against him. He would then implore Mr. Thornbury to again assist him in starting in business, that he might be able to support his dear children, and relieve him (Mr. Thornbury) of the expense of their maintenance.

Morecombe's other plan, in case he found the first fail, was somewhat similar to the one he had practised on Martha—that of threatening to publish his own infamy, and thus obtain money from Charity's father, who, he thought would,

to avoid the scandal of such an exposure, pay him for his silence. He had reached X——, when with his accustomed caution, he determined, preparatory to commencing operations, to ascertain how matters stood at the Red House. With this view he obtained, from persons resident in the neighbourhood, all the particulars of the family in his power; and the result was that, deplorable as his present position might be, it would probably be worse if it were known that he had been released from prison, as he might be called upon to do something for the maintenance of his two sons, who he found were at present well cared for, without any expense to himself, while those who were sheltering them were on the very verge of ruin.

After duly weighing all the chances, he came to the conclusion that his wisest course would be to return to London, and remain in that city where no rogue need starve, where cunning duly mixed with caution may always thrive, and one villain more would be but as a drop of water in the ocean. Having once resolved, neither the state of his purse, nor his natural love of enterprise, allowed him to linger any longer in X——, and he re-

turned to London, considering on his road how he should employ his abilities on arriving. For some time, however, no employment which he considered eligible could be found. It is true, one or two situations were proposed to him, where, by industry and frugality, he might have obtained the means of subsistence, but to hard work he had an invincible objection, and he considered that during his incarceration he had been subject to sufficient frugality, both in the way of diet and dress, to last him for his lifetime. At length, when the very moderate gratuity he had received when quitting the prison was almost exhausted, he met with an old turf acquaintance, who offered him a situation as *croupier* at a *rouge et noir* table, the owner of which was accustomed to attend race courses. This occupation was greatly to his taste, and he accepted it. At the end of a couple of years, however, the government resolved on putting down these tables, and he was again, with about one hundred and fifty pounds in his pocket (the product of his economies and bets,) thrown on his own resources.

Though his available capital was but small,

Morecombe resolved to start in trade with it. So hiring an office, and styling himself a commission agent, he commenced business. Affairs did not, however, prosper with him to the extent he anticipated, and becoming desperate, he determined to enter into larger speculations. He now, as he had truly informed Martha, attempted, by forging the acceptance of a respectable tradesman to a bill of exchange, to obtain a large quantity of goods, with the intention of selling them before the bill became due, and with the proceeds to start for America. Before, however, he had completed the sale of the goods, the fraud was detected, and he was arrested, tried, and found guilty. Several circumstances connected with the crime were considered by the Court to be of great atrocity, and he was sentenced to ten years' transportation.

On arriving in Van Diemen's Land, Morecombe was placed in a chain gang, his immediate companion being Bill Smithers, an ex-brickmaker, who had some months before been convicted of an attempt to murder a policeman, and sentenced to penal servitude for life. Although men of entirely different habits and tastes, a con-

siderable amount of intimacy sprung up between these worthies. Possibly it may have been due rather to the respect Bill had for the intellectual powers of his brother convict, and the relief Morecombe was able to obtain from his labours, by the greater muscular power of his associate, than of any real personal liking existing between them. In fact, after a few months' acquaintance, Bill, without being aware of it, became almost the drudge of Morecombe.

After some years' residence on the island, the severity of their discipline became considerably relaxed, and Bill was assigned to a sheep-farmer, while his friend Morecombe was taken as assistant in a spirit store about a couple of miles distant from the hut in which his friend resided. During the next three years they remained in their respective occupations; if giving but scant satisfaction to their employers, without doing anything to excite their serious displeasure. In fact, great as might have been their faults, each seemed to have some qualifications which counterbalanced them.

If the keeper of the spirit store had reason to doubt the integrity of his assistant—and it

is certain he had frequent cause for suspicion—Morecombe's dishonesty was in his eyes considerably neutralised by his servant's tact and persuasive powers in inducing the customers to drink to such an extent as to be utterly unable to audit their scores when placed before them. It may be easily imagined, when the only restraint on the amount was the conscience of the tapster, not unfrequently the customers were greatly surprised at the quantity of spirits they appeared to have consumed; while the landlord shut his eyes to the palpable peculations of his assistant, under the conviction that, if he was being robbed, it would be difficult to find another tapster who would not plunder him as much, without possessing the tact and ingenuity of the one he now had. Morecombe had also another qualification highly esteemed in the eyes of all publicans. Though he had great ability in inducing the customers to drink, he never by any chance got drunk himself. In fact, it may be said of him that he was a thoroughly sober man—perhaps the only respectable qualification he possessed, but which, at the same time, rendered him still more redoubtable as a villain.

Bill Smithers, on the contrary, frequently gave great offence to his employers by his drunken habits and frequent carelessness; but these faults were again counterbalanced by the extraordinary diminution of the native population in the district during his residence there. So marked was it as to excite the wonder even of the authorities, accustomed as they were to see the blacks disappear from the face of the earth, and Bill was questioned on the subject. He "couldn't account for it," he said, "unless perhaps, it was the brutes didn't like to come within the reach of his fist, and that was the most he ever gave them. He didn't like using the white powder to get rid of them, as some did; it wasn't manly or fair, when he was able pretty well to kill 'em with a blow of his fist, they were such weak varmint." It was hinted more than once that the fist was not the only weapon Bill used, and that occasionally a dead body had been seen with a wound on the head, strongly bearing the appearance of having been from the blow of a hatchet; but as there was no evidence that Bill had inflicted it, and as he could not be made, by the just spirit of the

British law, to bear evidence against himself, what was the use of pursuing the matter further?

After their assignment to their respective employers, the two old companions in chains met frequently. When Morecombe wanted a little recreation and bodily exercise, he would walk over to Bill's hut, and there spend an hour; while Bill, on his part, after he had folded the sheep for the night, which, especially on Sundays, was at a very early hour, would stroll to the spirit stores to spend the evening, drinking with anybody who would treat him, and picking a quarrel with those who would not; and as it has been before stated, his strength was enormous, and his pugilistic skill very considerable, he met with but few who were not willing to purchase his friendship at the price of a dram of rum.

It may readily be imagined that, although the life led by Morecombe at the spirit stores, where he could practice dishonesty with impunity, provided he used a certain amount of caution in his peculations, was not without its charms: at the same time, in proportion as the

amount of his plunder increased, his desire to leave the island increased with it, till at last the accumulations amounted to about two hundred pounds. This he contrived to secret in a hollow tree on the road to his friend Bill Smithers, in a position where it would be impossible for a stranger to find it, and he now determined to leave Van Diemen's Land and return to his native country. But there yet remained more than three years of his sentence unexpired, nor was there the slightest probability of his being able to get the term reduced. The idea now occurred to him whether it would not be possible to make his escape. He could not, however, disguise from himself the great danger there would be in the attempt, for, from his particular occupation, few convicts were better known than he was, and if he were caught in the fact, he knew perfectly well that the term of his punishment would be considerably lengthened.

The idea of escaping haunted him, however, so pertinaciously, that at last he began to entertain plans for putting it in force. He knew he would have one ready coadjutor desperate

enough for any attempt, and in person as strong as three ordinary men—his friend Bill Smithers. He also anticipated finding several staunch recruits in a chain gang which had lately been sent up to that part of the country for the purpose of making a road, and who had among them some ruffians of most unenviable notoriety. Morecombe knew, however, how little these miscreants were to be trusted, and he had therefore to devise some plan by which he could throw the onus of forming the conspiracy on some other individual; while, in case it succeeded, he could profit by it. Nor was the plan as impracticable as it at first appeared. He found his friend, Bill Smithers, had already formed a strong intimacy with many of the choicest spirits of the chain gang, and to Bill he now suggested the idea that it would be comparatively easy to overpower the guard, and make their escape, seizing a boat from a whaler that was lying in the harbour, and then sail over to New South Wales.

Bill readily entered into the plot, and put himself in communication with six of the gang, and as two of them had been sailors, and there-

fore able to navigate the boat, the means of escape would become the more easy. All things at last were arranged, and the conspirators having had files provided them by Bill, who had received them from Morecombe, released themselves from their fetters in the night. They had, however, to pass on their way a spot on which was one of the convict guards, who would, they knew, the moment he perceived them, give the alarm. This danger Bill took upon himself to remove, as he was of course at liberty in the night, and could move about as he pleased. When, therefore, the hour for their escape had arrived, he crept softly up to the guard, and with a hatchet in his hand, concealed himself behind a bush, ready to start out on the first indication he saw of his having discovered the fugitives. He had not long to wait. The sentinel challenged the party advancing, and the next moment was stretched senseless and dying on the ground. However, the escape of the conspirators was not yet complete, for the alarm had been given from another point, and the police of the island were quickly on the alert. Bill, and four of his companions, contrived to reach

the boat with safety, while the others were taken prisoners, and among them was one more than they had calculated on, and that one was Morecombe. His characteristic cunning had been shown through the whole affair, but, like many others, he had overshot the mark.

Although he had made Bill Smithers his agent in the matter, he had kept carefully aloof himself, and never appeared to take the slightest interest in the affair. In fact, when he and the other two men who were seized were brought together by the authorities, he conscientiously stated he had never spoken a word to either of them, while they on their part admitted he was a stranger to them. On being questioned how he happened to be in the neighbourhood, he made it appear that his presence was purely accidental, and that he had suffered from headache, and was taking a walk by moonlight, thinking it might do him good. Those who arrested him even admitted that he was the distance of several hundred yards from any of the other men, all tending to prove the absence on his part of any complicity in the escape of the others, and the murder of the sentinel.

So far all went on smoothly enough, but one piece of evidence was brought to bear against Morecombe, which, although it might afford no direct proof that he was engaged in the conspiracy, went strongly against him as having been concerned in a robbery. When all was in readiness for the escape of the felons, of which he had been informed by Bill Smithers, he had found his way to the tree where his treasure was concealed, and then intended to join the others after they had effected their escape. On being questioned as to the manner he became possessed of the two hundred pounds, he gave a somewhat confused answer, and the keeper of the spirit store was summoned, if possible, to give evidence on the subject. His testimony was to the effect that he must have been robbed to an enormous extent by Morecombe, and he identified several of the coins found upon him, as well as one five-pound note. Morecombe was now tried for robbery, and sentenced to be again placed in a chain gang, and undergo five years more penal servitude in addition to the original term.

Of his companions who had escaped by the

boat nothing more was heard, and it was proved with tolerable certainty that neither of the men who had been arrested was concerned in the murder of the sentinel, the hatchet which was found being identified beyond doubt as having belonged to Bill Smithers. A reward of five hundred pounds was offered for the apprehension of the murderer; bills and placards were posted in all parts of the colony, describing minutely his appearance and probable age, but, as before stated, nothing was heard of him, and the affair gradually ceased to excite any further interest in the colony.

After the term of Morecombe's sentence had fully expired, he remained a short time longer on the island, looking out for an opportunity to return to England. The best, however, that offered itself was that of returning as a body-servant to an invalid colonist who was about to visit England, and Morecombe, though with a strong feeling of disgust, accepted it. Little love existed between Morecombe and his master during their voyage. The colonist had lived too many years in the neighbourhood of our great convict establishment not to have acquired a knowledge of the

class of man he was dealing with. The agreement he made with Morecombe was that he was to receive no wages for his services, but that, if he conducted himself with propriety during the voyage, a handsome present should be given him on landing; his master thereby keeping to a great extent in his own hands the control of his servant's good behaviour.

At first Morecombe conducted himself in such a manner as to give no great cause for complaint, but long before the ship arrived in England the cloven foot had more than once showed itself, partly in acts of dishonesty—which, however, could not be brought home to him, but of which his master was certain—and partly in impertinence and inattention to his duties. The result was that when the ship arrived in England he was dismissed with one sovereign as remuneration for his services.

Notwithstanding the pleasure he experienced at again reaching his native land, Morecombe's prospects were certainly of the blackest. He had not a friend in the world; and with the exception of a guinea in his pocket, no means of subsistence. He had, however, been too well accustomed to

the vicissitudes attending a dishonest life to be altogether cast down, and after deliberating for some time what steps he would pursue, he determined to visit the Red House, and if any of the family still remained there to flaunt his degradation before their eyes, so as to extort from them a sum of money sufficient for him to again commence the world with, under a threat to proclaim his relationship to his two sons were he refused. But a serious difficulty arose in the way of putting his plan into execution. Before he had resolved on adopting it, he had spent nearly the half of his capital, and the remainder was not sufficient to pay the expense of his journey and maintenance on the road, especially if he found the family gone from the Red House, when he would be obliged to return again to London. Fortune, however, came to his aid. In the beer-shop at which he was lodging, he had formed the acquaintance of two of those scoundrels who attempt by means of a pea and three thimbles, or three cards, one being a knave, to cheat the unwary. When Morecombe first made their acquaintance, they were exercising their craft with the cards in the tap-room. Their

game had not been very lucrative, and with the exception of a few pence they had swindled from some rustics, they had gained nothing. They now invited Morecombe to try his luck, but he declined. At the same time he seemed greatly attracted by the system they adopted, though he did not clearly understand it. He thought the cards a vast improvement on the thimble, possibly from the fact that the latter required considerable digital dexterity, which he had not, his thumb nail being hardly of the form requisite for holding the pea without detection.

When the card players found that Morecombe was not to be tempted to try his luck, as they called it, they quitted the table, and were about going to some other locality, when he said to their leader,

"Look here; I know perfectly well there is some dodge in your game, and I don't quite understand it. Now, if you teach it me so that I can play it myself, I'll give you five shillings. I would say more, but I haven't got it."

The man at first declined the offer, but added, "I'd take it, only you'll be working against us."

"That I promise you I'll not do," said Morecombe. "On the contrary, if you'll shew me how it's done, and let me play it, you being my 'bonnets,' all I gain to-night shall be yours besides the five shillings, and I'll leave the neighbourhood to-morrow morning."

The man accepted the terms, and entering a little room at the back of the beer-shop, he taught Morecombe the trick, and they then left the place and went to another locality. Morecombe here played it with considerable success, the others acting as his coadjutors. When all was over, Morecombe handed the receipts to the man, and then bade him good night.

The next morning Morecombe invested a portion of the few shillings he had remaining in the purchase of a pack of cards, and with these as his sole means of subsistence, he started on his road to X——, and if he gained but little, his travelling expenses were proportionately small. Onward he went till he had reached his destination, when, finding himself possessed of a few shillings, he determined not to risk coming into collision with the police, but contented himself with taking a bed at a beer-shop, and in making

inquiries as to the family at present residing at the Red House. He had but little difficulty in gaining the desired information, for Edgar Thornbury was now well known in the town as one of the richest private gentlemen in the county. He also discovered that his son Walter, who resided in London, was engaged to be married to a daughter of one of the canons of the Cathedral. Of Martha alone he could obtain but little information. Few seemed to know her, though he was told there was a lady who resided with Mrs. Thornbury at the Red House, and who frequently visited Mrs. Keats, but they did not know her name. Morecombe easily understood it was Martha, and she, above all others, he considered the best person on whom to commence operations. He now resolved cautiously to inspect the neighbourhood of the Red House, but to avoid being seen, as he might be known there, and he took a somewhat circuitous route, occasionally making inquiries about the family on his road.

The information he had that day acquired was not of any very great importance, and he was upon the point of returning to X——, when

he saw a group of excavators, with their wives and families, strolling along the road, most of the men carrying their tools on their shoulders. As his stock of money was now getting low, Morecombe thought this would be a good opportunity to exercise his skill with the cards; so picking out the three which had been prepared, he seated himself on the ground, and putting his hat between his legs, the crown uppermost, he placed the cards on it, and when the group had reached him, he invited them to try their luck. They now gathered round him, but for some time none of them seemed disposed to begin, till, at last, one of their number staked a penny on the card, and was, of course, allowed to win. Others succeeded the first player, and the luck seemed pretty evenly balanced, sometimes Morecombe winning, sometimes the excavators. At last one man threw a shilling on the hat, and was about taking up the card, when Morecombe shifted it.

"You d——d blackguard," said the man, "what do you mean by that? If you try to swindle me I'll break your head for you, I will."

Morecombe immediately began to make some

excuse, when, looking in the man's face, he became suddenly silent. Taking up the cards, he put them, with the rest of the pack, in his pocket, and then, rising from the ground, and placing his hat on his head, he looked sternly in the navvy's face, who seemed to quail under his glance. Morecombe then laid his hand on the man's shoulder, and, with a voice very different from the apologetic tone he had commenced with, said to him,

"Bill Smithers, come here. I want you."

The man, however, seemed too confused either to follow or answer him, when Morecombe again said,

"I told you to come here, sir. I want to speak to you, so come directly."

For a moment Bill Smithers (for it was he) seemed to be in doubt whether to obey, and then, growling in so low a tone as only to be heard by Morecombe, he said,

"What do you want with me, you vagabond?"

He then quitted the group, and followed Morecombe till they were out of ear-shot, but still in sight of the others, when Morecombe, turning sharply round, said to him,

"Bill, my old pal, I'm hard up, and want some money, so give me some."

"I shan't give you a farthing," said Bill. "Who are you, I'd like to know? I don't owe you anything, and why should I give you money?" And he continued ejaculating similar sentences for some time, Morecombe remaining silent the while, and looking with an expression of contempt at his companion.

Bill, finding Morecombe made no reply, attempted to lash himself into a passion.

"I tell you what it is, you vagabond, if you think to bully and crow over me you're mistaken. I don't know who you are, nor what you mean by speaking to me. I've got a great mind to break your head for you."

"Bill," said Morecombe, "you do know who I am; and although you'd like to break my head, you daren't do it."

"Darn't I?" said Bill, putting his pick on the ground, and taking off his jacket. "Come on, I say. I dare say my mates 'll see that you have fair play, if you're afraid of that."

The group of navvies, seeing a fight in prospect, naturally became interested in it, and were

advancing towards the spot, when Morecombe, who had preserved a perfect coolness during the whole dispute, said calmly,

"Capital haul it will be for them, Bill. They little expect there's five hundred pounds to be shared by them; but they soon will."

"What do you mean?" said Bill, getting evidently alarmed.

"That there's a reward of five hundred pounds for your apprehension, for having murdered the sentinel; and thousands of bills were distributed, describing your age and appearance, and everything about you. I've got one with me now," he said, putting his hand into his pocket, "and I should like to show it to your mates. Precious lucky work it will be for them."

"I say, Morecombe, I beg your pardon," said Bill. "I didn't mean to offend you. You're not going to split upon an old pal, are you?"

"That entirely depends whether my old pal's civil or not, and does what I tell him. I want five shillings. Let me have it at once."

Bill immediately put his hand in his pocket, and drew out two half-crowns, which he gave to Morecombe; and then, turning round to the

others, who had now come closer to them, he said,

"What do you all want? Can't my mate and me have a little talk together without your interfering."

"Well, we thought you were going to have a set-to, and that you wanted us to see fair play; however, if we're wrong, we beg your pardon—we can't say more than that." And they continued their road onwards towards the "Brickmakers' Arms."

Morecombe and Bill Smithers now followed at a distance, Morecombe taking the precaution of never letting the others be altogether out of sight. It was then that Martha, on returning from X——, with Fanny Keats, in her pony-chaise, met these two, after she had passed the "Brickmakers' Arms," where the rest were assembled.

It must not be imagined that when Morecombe informed Bill Smithers that he had in his pocket a bill issued by the authorities in Van Diemen's Land, offering a large reward for his apprehension, as well as minutely describing his person, he was telling the truth. He had

formerly seen such a bill, but had never possessed a copy. The statement he had made was merely a brilliant invention of the moment, elicited by the danger he was then in, partly from the gigantic strength of his opponent, but still more—for Morecombe was no coward—from the alarm he experienced lest his companion might then, or on some future occasion, mention the circumstances under which they had first met. He had marked the extraordinary effect the threat of producing the hand-bill, offering the reward for his apprehension, had on Smithers; and finding the power he now possessed over him, resolved to maintain it. He did not see any particular way of making it useful at the present time, but kept it in readiness, should circumstances occur to require his fellow-convict's assistance. One reason among many others that might be adduced to account for Morecombe not having brought one of the bills to England with him, was that he, in common with most others in the colony who took any interest in the matter, believed that Bill Smithers and his companions who made their escape in the whaler's boat had been lost

at sea—in fact, it was considered so certain, that after a short time the authorities gave over all attempts to capture the runaways. It therefore did Morecombe's strength of nerve considerable credit not to have been startled at the sudden appearance of a chain-companion whom he had imagined to have been drowned so many years since.

It was, however, with great difficulty, and after undergoing considerable danger, that Bill Smithers and his mates succeeded in reaching Sydney. They then plunged into the interior, leading a life little removed from bush-ranging. By degrees they separated, till only Bill and a slightly built man, who had been a sailor, were left. They wished to return to England, and the sailor found the captain of a ship willing to let them work their passage home, provided they both shipped with him, evidently calculating that the superior strength of the one would to a certain degree compensate for the comparative weakness of the other. Nothing worthy of mention occurred during their voyage, and on landing Bill Smithers resumed his old trade of brick-making. A few months after his arri-

val, he fell in love with the daughter of a ganger on some railway works, whom he shortly afterwards married, and quitting his former occupation, worked with his father-in-law, for whom he appeared to entertain considerable good-feeling, seldom assaulting him, and then only when under the influence of drink.

The same rule held good with Bill's wife during her father's life-time; but after his death (which occurred in about two years) a change for the worse took place in Bill, and he frequently brutally assaulted her, without being able to plead his intoxicated state as an excuse. They had but one child, the little girl already alluded to, and the birth of this child appears to have developed a singular idiosyncrasy in Bill Smithers. Hitherto, with the exception of a short time after his marriage, when he exhibited something like affection for his wife, he had never shown the slightest love for any human being, but he now entertained for his child a strong and unvarying attachment. This occasioned more than one change even in his habits and manners. Before her birth, his great passion was for bull pups, but now, al-

though he greatly admired them, and was considered by his associates as an indisputable authority on points in their excellence, he ceased breeding them, and unless some exciting fight between two dogs was about to come off, he took comparatively but little interest in them. It was also remarked that he never struck his wife when she had the infant in her arms, lest he should hurt it, and he exhibited several other similar peculiarities in his behaviour, showing the power the child had over his mind, but hardly of sufficient interest to be worth narrating.

As his little daughter grew older, and began to know him, his love for her appeared to increase. But here, however, his naturally perverse temperament began to show itself in a most objectionable manner. Instead of his brutal behaviour to his wife diminishing in proportion as his love for the child increased, it appeared to have a directly contrary effect. With the child in her arms, she had an effectual shield from his blows; but now it was able to stand alone, she had none. If the child cried for anything which had been denied it by the

mother, Bill invariably took his little girl's part, and would attack his wife with great barbarity. He even appeared to become jealous of the natural love the child showed for its mother, and made frequent attempts to disturb it. But fortunately the child was at that age when the mother is as a god in its eyes, and Bill's teachings had but little effect on her. As she became older, he hoped to succeed, and, as shown in the episode of the bull pup, he took every opportunity in his power to train her to his own way of thinking, so that, when her reasoning faculties were more matured, he would be able to separate her love from her mother, and himself be her sole parent, guide, and instructor.

Each time Morecombe visited the neighbourhood of the Red House, he made a point of seeing his old associate, and by degrees contrived to gain over him so much power as to make him a mere tool in his hands. He generally borrowed money of him, as he now considered it imprudent to continue the card-playing, having ascertained that the police regarded him with a suspicious eye. By degrees, partly through Bill's agency, and other means, he contrived to identify the lady who visited at

Mr. Keats's house as Martha, and he resolved to have an interview with her whenever he had an opportunity of finding her alone. For this purpose he continued to haunt the different roads about the Red House, especially the one which led from X——.

The first opportunity he had of meeting Martha alone was on the occasion when he attempted to seize her pony's head, which, as the reader is already aware, caused her great alarm. Having received intelligence that the fright Martha had experienced by his behaviour had reached the ears of the police, Morecombe for some time kept away from the neighbourhood of the house, contenting himself with occasional visits to the village, for the purpose of obtaining money from Bill Smithers. He also heard, through him and his wife, of the lady from the Red House having established a school in the village, and acting as district-visitor among the families of the navvies, and he justly considered this could be no other than Martha. He next ascertained the path by which she came, and one afternoon placed himself in the road to meet her, when he had the interview with her already narrated in this chapter.

CHAPTER X.

THE EVENT.

WE must now return to the family at the Red House. After Martha's interview with Morecombe she continued her path homewards for some time, and then suddenly stopped to reflect on what course she should pursue. She had, however, great difficulty in coming to a conclusion. She dreaded informing her brother of Morecombe's residence in the neighbourhood, for Edgar was of a determined disposition, and had felt so bitterly the infamous treatment his sister had received from his (Morecombe's) hands, that no consideration for Walter's feelings would prevent him from having an open quarrel with the villain. Again the idea struck her that a quarrel between her brother and Morecombe would only tend to bring the latter's infamy into publicity without the slightest pos-

sible good effect arising from it. Morecombe's term of imprisonment had expired long ago, and she saw that her brother had no more right to control his movements or oblige him to leave the locality than he had over any other person in the neighbourhood; while Morecombe on his side thoroughly enraged, might return to London, and under the threat of establishing his own infamy, and the relationship with his son, extort from Walter whatever sums he pleased. All things considered, Martha thought the better plan would be to purchase the villain's silence; and for that purpose when she gave him the next day the fifty pounds she had promised, she would endeavour to draw from him what his future intentions were, and in case he seemed amenable to reason, to offer to assist him to the utmost in her power, should he consent to leave the country.

Martha now continued her way homewards, and before reaching the house drew her veil over her face to conceal from Mrs. Thornbury and the servants the fact that she had been crying, as they might easily judge from the redness of her eyes. On entering the house, the

first person she met was her own maid Cooper, who told her Mrs. Thornbury begged she would excuse her absence from the dinner-table that day, as she was suffering from a violent headache, and had gone to bed. Although sorry for the inconvenience her sister-in-law was feeling, it gave Martha an opportunity of escaping her questions as to the manner she had passed the afternoon; for Martha was a bad dissembler, and it is more than probable she would have broken down under the slightest cross-examination.

In the evening Martha had a lengthened visit from Mr. Keats, during which he informed her of a letter he had received from Edgar Thornbury, telling him he intended calling on him some time in the afternoon of the next day, as he particularly wished to speak to him on some matters of importance connected with Walter's contemplated marriage and other affairs, and hoped he would be at home.

"I am sorry to say," continued Mr. Keats, "that just before starting from home this evening, I received a request from the Bishop to meet him at the consecration of a church at Wardrop, a few miles the other side of X——, and to remain

with him in the afternoon, as he wished to speak to me on some business of importance. I am afraid therefore I shall not reach home before seven o'clock in the evening, but I will do so at an earlier hour if possible. I shall leave word that, if your brother can await my return, it will give me much pleasure to see him; but if not, I will call on him the following morning, although it would be somewhat inconvenient, as I have promised to do duty in the Cathedral."

Martha said she had no doubt her brother would wait, but if not, she thought it most proble he would not give Mr. Keats the trouble of calling on him. She would propose to drive Edgar over to X——, as she wished to make arrangements with Fanny for her to renew her visit to the Red House. After chatting with Martha for some time longer as to the probable length of stay her brother might make in Calcutta, what arrangements would be made at the Red House during his absence, and other kindred subjects, Mr. Keats took his leave and returned home.

The next morning Mrs. Thornbury had sufficiently recovered from her indisposition of the

evening before to meet Martha at the breakfast table. She appeared, however, far from well, and Martha told her she thought she would have been more prudent if she had kept her bed a little longer.

"I don't think it would have done me any good," said Mrs. Thornbury; "and really there is very little I can complain of besides this unaccountable depression of spirits. It will, I dare say, pass off after Edgar's return, when my mind will have plenty of occupation in making preparations for our journey. But, Martha dear, you appear rather pale this morning, I hope you have slept well.

"Perfectly well," said Martha, "and I don't think I ever felt better in my life." Then rapidly changing the conversation, she continued, "Mr. Keats called here last night; did not your maid tell you?"

"Yes, she mentioned it," said Mrs. Thornbury. "I suppose it was merely a friendly visit."

"Quite so," replied Martha. "It was partly to inform us that he should not be in X—— when the train arrives by which Edgar is expected, but that he hoped to return an hour or two

later, so that if Edgar did not reach home in good time, we should know the cause of his delay. He also said he would leave word that, in case Edgar preferred it, he would see him the next morning instead."

"I hope sincerely he will come home at once then, and call on Mr. Keats to-morrow," said Mrs. Thornbury. "It cannot be a matter of such importance he wishes to see him about, that it may not be deferred for a few hours."

Martha made no reply, and the conversation turned on other subjects. Shortly after breakfast Martha left Mrs. Thornbury, and proceeded to her own room to make preparations for meeting Morecombe.

On arriving at the appointed spot, Martha found Morecombe already there. Unlike his cynical, uncivil behaviour of the day before, he now addressed her with a sort of respectful easy courtesy.

"I am greatly obliged to you for keeping your appointment so punctually," he said to her. "Not that I had the slightest reason to imagine you would have missed it, but with one as destitute as I am, a moment's delay on your part

might have conjured up great uneasiness on mine."

"I should have been sorry, Mr. Morecombe," said Martha coolly, "to have caused you any inconvenience. I have brought with me the fifty pounds, as well as the note you required," she continued, presenting him with a sealed envelope. "I am sorry I could not give you the hundred, but I have no more in the house."

"But fifty pounds will hardly be of much use to me, Martha," said Morecombe, opening the envelope, and examining its contents. "That it will greatly assist me is true, but one hundred pounds would be sufficient to allow me to purchase a respectable outfit, pay my passage to America, and have something over to start with there. Do not think I wish to impose upon you, but you must see yourself that less than that sum would be of very little use to me."

Martha caught eagerly at the idea of Morecombe's leaving England. It was exactly the point she wished to arrive at, and during her walk from the Red House her mind had been employed in considering in what manner she could best break the subject to him, so as to in-

duce him to go, without her shewing so much anxiety about it as to cause him to be extortionate in his demands. He had now commenced the subject himself, and she resolved to follow it up.

"I would willingly have given you the sum you required," she said, "and will do so to-morrow or the next day. As I think I told you before, I have no account at the X——— bank, but my brother has, and as soon as he returns I will ask him for a cheque for fifty pounds, which I will give you."

Morecombe remained silent for a moment, and then said,

"Your brother, I think, returns to-day?"

"He does."

"The train from London," he continued, "arrives about one o'clock; he will reach home then at two. If you ask him for the cheque at once, I shall have time to get it cashed before the bank in X—— closes, and thus should be able to reach London to-night, which I wish if possible to do, for I am disgusted at the low society and disreputable associates my poverty obliges me to mix with while I am here."

"My brother will arrive by the train which reaches X—— at half-past four," said Martha, "and he will then remain for some hours there, having a business appointment; so he will not be at home till late at night. At the same time you may depend upon my word, that if you wish to be in London this evening, and will tell me the address where the money can be sent, you shall have it by to-morrow's post. Will that satisfy you?"

"Certainly," he said. "I am greatly obliged to you for your kindness."

"But let it be clearly understood between us," said Martha, "that you do not make yourself known to Walter while you remain in England."

"Why not, Martha?"

"Because you might do him an injury, and could not possibly do him any good."

"But in what way would he receive any injury by my making myself known to him prior to my departure from England? Let us talk reasonably on the matter, Martha. I see that the words I uttered yesterday concerning him are still fresh on your memory, but you had then greatly irritated me by your unfriendly be-

haviour. No, believe me that, great as the causes of complaint you have against me may be, want of affection for my children is not among the number. And that being the case, can you wonder at my wishing to see my eldest son, whom I have not seen since he was a child, before my leaving England perhaps for ever, certainly not to return to it before I have earned for myself an honourable position in society."

"But," said Martha, "there is the danger of my brother becoming aware that you are in existence, for both he and Walter imagine you to be dead. If my brother found, therefore, that any affection or even acquaintance existed between you and your son, it might cause ill-feeling between them."

"And what right has he to interfere?" said Morecombe. "I do not ask the question offensively," he continued, noticing an expression of displeasure on Martha's face, "but excuse me if I submit that he has no right to object to my seeing my eldest son after so many years of separation. It is true he may have taken him into his offices as a clerk, paying him a salary for his services, but I have no doubt Walter

fully earns the money he receives, so that after all the obligation he is under to his uncle is very different from that he is under to you."

"You do my brother an injustice," said Martha; "he has always behaved with the greatest kindness and consideration to your sons, and I think his conduct to them—especially to Walter—at the present moment proves it. At the same time my brother is of an inflexible character, and when he has made up his mind it is almost an impossibility to make him change it. I tell you candidly he holds your memory in great aversion, for, as I said before, he believes you to be dead, and if he found you were living, and thought Walter had any affection for you, it might go far to neutralize the love he bears him."

"I will say nothing that might hurt your feelings, Martha, in reply to your description of your brother's sentiments towards me," said Morecombe, bitterly. "Nay, more, I will endeavour to follow your advice not to call upon Walter unless the temptation is too strong for me to bear. But clearly understand me, Martha, if I do forbear seeing my son, it is solely to

oblige you, and not out of consideration to your brother. I am deeply indebted to you for your kindness to my children, but as I told you before, I owe nothing to him. If he has paid them for acting as his clerks, they have given him full value for his money in return."

"Again you do my brother an injustice," said Martha. "He has behaved to them always with the greatest liberality, and never more so than at the present moment."

"Might I ask in what way?" inquired Morecombe.

"I hardly know whether I should be justified in telling you any of my brother's affairs without his permission," said Martha, doubtingly.

"And his permission to tell me anything that might afford me pleasure you will certainly never have, Martha. You leave me, you see, by your own silence, no alternative but to call on Walter. You cannot imagine that I should be heartless enough to leave England without ascertaining in what position my sons are placed, and the ultimate probability of their success in life. Strong as my wish to oblige you may be, Martha, I must and will know on

what footing my sons stand with respect to your brother, or I will call on Walter and receive the intelligence from his own lips."

Martha now began to be terribly alarmed at Morecombe's threats, and after a few moments' consideration, determined that it would be better explicitly to tell him all than run the risk which would attend his calling at the house of business.

"Mr. Morecombe," she at length said to him, "I will tell you candidly all, under the condition that you give me your solemn promise not to call on Walter before quitting England for America."

"Without the slightest hesitation I give you that promise," said Morecombe, "and I will keep it to the letter, provided you hide nothing from me, and candidly answer any questions I may put to you tending to clear up points I do not understand."

"Well, then," said Martha, "my brother's partner has lately died in Calcutta, leaving him the greater portion of his fortune, after deducting a considerable sum, which is to remain in the firm. My brother is now obliged to go to

Calcutta, not only to perform his duty as executor, but also with the intention of making arrangements to relinquish his share in the business to your two sons. He has already admitted Walter to a small share in it, so as to enable him when he marries to live in comfort and respectability. In a few years, or as soon as my brother finds your sons possess sufficient experience to conduct the business without him, he will withdraw altogether from the firm, leaving it in their hands. He has also made provision, in case of his death, that they succeed to it absolutely, without his widow or any other person having a claim; as well as the greater portion of his fortune. And now I think you will admit you might do your own children great harm by attempting anything that might cause a coolness between them and my brother."

Morecombe was so deeply absorbed in thought, when Martha made her last observation, that it is more than probable he did not hear her; it is certain he made no reply, and she repeated it.

"Yes, Martha," he said, hesitatingly, as if yet having some difficulty in concentrating his ideas on her remark. "Yes, certainly. Do not be

afraid I will do nothing to their prejudice, be assured. But I do not exactly see how my sons will be able to conduct so extensive a business without capital."

"Possibly I explained myself incorrectly," said Martha, "for I have had but little experience in business transactions. My brother not only intends leaving the whole of his present capital in the firm, but has made arrangements to add ten thousand pounds more; the same amount left by his late partner. So that even at the present moment there is twenty thousand pounds in the business, besides my brother's private interest. I am afraid I have but badly explained myself, but I cannot help it."

"Your brother has no family, Martha?"

"None."

"Has his wife many relations?"

"No very near relations, and none she appears to take any interest in; while she seems to have great good feeling for your sons. In fact, I believe both my brother and his wife look upon them as their own children."

Morecombe remained silent for some moments, and then said,

"Martha, you have perfectly convinced me that perhaps I should be doing a great injustice to my children were I now to interfere with them. No, I will follow your advice, and allow them to believe I am dead. At the same time, I candidly tell you, I will remain estranged from them only till they are independent of your brother, and then I will make myself known to them. You must admit yourself that I ought to have no impediment thrown in my way—at least, should my position in society then be such as not to degrade them by their connection with me. Now, Martha, good-bye, for I see you are anxious to return. Fear neither annoyance from me, nor evasion of my promise. I am too much obliged to you for your liberality to disregard your wishes, were there no other cause. As soon as I am settled in London, I will inform you the address where the money can be sent. I will not ask you to shake hands with me, for I admit I have given you too much cause to dislike me. But believe me, Martha, even as the devil is not so black as he is painted, so am I not so bad as you imagine me. Good-bye."

On quitting Morecombe, Martha determined to pay her round of visits to the families of the agricultural labourers employed on her brother's estates, as was her weekly custom. Although the regular day for her visit should have been on the morrow, she naturally considered she would have so many subjects of interest to talk over with her brother, that she should feel little disposed to leave the house; and it would therefore be an economy of time if she went that day instead. On this occasion the time she occupied was much longer than usual, as the families on whom she called, not expecting her till a day later, had not made the usual preparations to receive her, by putting things in order, so that everything might wear a tidy appearance; and the result was that Martha's ideas of order and cleanliness were on more than one occasion considerably shocked at the sights which met her eye. Nor did she quit the dwellings of those whose want of order had excited her disapprobation, without giving them some lengthy and very sharp lectures. In fact, so long a time did these visits occupy, that the dinner-bell had rung before she reached home.

During dinner little conversation passed between the sisters-in-law, and that merely on indifferent subjects which presented themselves to their minds. When their meal was over they repaired to the drawing-room, but the same oppression which had existed at the dinner-table seemed still to weigh upon them, and after sitting together for a few minutes, and making one or two fruitless efforts to force the conversation, Mrs. Thornbury took up a book, and opening it, appeared to read, but an acute observer might have perceived that she not only felt no interest in it, but probably was not even aware of the subject it treated on. Martha, on her part, quitted the drawing-room, and entering the conservatory, began arranging the flowers, altering their position, and plucking off dead leaves; but all was done so mechanically, there would have been no difficulty in detecting that her mind was absorbed on some totally different matter, and that she felt no more real interest in glancing at the flowers when she re-arranged them, than Mrs. Thornbury had in the book now open before her, which she was possibly not even reading.

As evening closed in, Martha returned to the drawing-room, and Mrs. Thornbury, seeing her enter, closed the book which lay open before her, but which the fading light had long precluded the possibility of her reading, and they attempted to converse, but without much success, till Mrs. Thornbury suddenly asked Martha how she intended employing her time during their absence in Calcutta.

"It frequently strikes me," she continued, "that you will find it dull here when we are away. I know nothing which conveys the sense of loneliness more than dwelling in a large house which has but few inmates. When I was quite a girl (I was barely fourteen years of age when I left England for Calcutta) I resided with an aged maiden aunt in a large rambling old mansion in the south of England. She was naturally taciturn, so I had but little conversation with her, and being very economical, she kept but few servants, and even with these I was not allowed to converse. I can remember as well as possible the extraordinary chilly effect the place seemed to have over me, possibly the more so from being naturally of a very buoyant, lively

disposition, though from what you see of me now, Martha, you would hardly think so. I frequently suspect it had a prejudicial effect on my temperament, and through life I can remember as well as possible the acuteness of hearing which the dead silence of the house seemed to produce in me. In fact, the very creaking of the old servant's steps, as she came to take the candle away after I was in bed, seemed to reverberate through the old mansion when she left me, the sounds appearing gradually to die away till she had reached her own bed-room in a further part of the house, when I could distinctly hear her closing the door. Whether this was the case, or merely the effect of imagination, I cannot tell, but I really believed that from the dead silence which usually reigned in the house at night, my sense of hearing had obtained so much acuteness as to have been able distinctly to follow the footsteps of the old woman till she had reached her room. Hours after she had gone I would lie with my head on the pillow, wide awake, trembling at every noise I heard, or fancied I heard, though I believe it possible that sounds which would have been inaudible to other per-

sons were then perfectly distinguishable by me."

When Mrs. Thornbury had concluded Martha remained for some moments silent, having at the same time a great disposition to speak. At length she inquired to what source her sister-in-law attributed the sounds she heard, and which were inaudible to other people.

"Possibly," replied Mrs. Thornbury, in a tone of affected carelessness, "the nibbling of a mouse in the passage outside the room." Then, suddenly turning to Martha, she continued, "I dare say you will think me exceedingly superstitious and ridiculous, but I almost imagined words were frequently whispered in my ear; and yet they could hardly be called words, but appeared more like inarticulate expressions of love and affection—perfectly appreciable. When first they occurred to me they almost seemed to me the emanations from my own mind; but by degrees I began to distinguish they were not, and that they were whispered to me by some one near my bed. My interest was now, of course, greatly excited, and the more my mind was fixed on the subject, the more clearly did these expressions of affection appear, till at last

either the thought occurred to me or it was whispered in words that I was being addressed by the spirit of my own mother, whom I had lost about twelve months before, and to whom I was exceedingly attached. The night that the idea of its being my mother first came to me, I replied aloud when she addressed me, and in equal terms of affection; but the sound of my voice seemed completely to dispel the illusion—if illusion it was—and nothing more was whispered to me either that night or for several afterwards. It would be difficult to explain the grief I felt on the occasion, and earnestly did I pray that my mother would again return to me. My prayer at last seemed to be heard, for she afterwards occasionally visited me, and continued to do so till I left England with my father to sail for Calcutta."

"Did she never appear to you?" inquired Martha, with considerable curiosity.

"Never," was Mrs. Thornbury's reply. "It was solely by this mute conversation there was any communication between us."

"Was the conversation ever renewed while you were in India?" asked Martha.

"No, not once," said Mrs. Thornbury. "But to return to my subject, Martha, I know you have far greater strength of mind than I can boast of, but still it strikes me you will find yourself exceedingly dull in this house by yourself."

"But I shall not always be alone," said Martha. "Fanny Keats will, I am sure, frequently pay me a visit, and I have a great many poor friends and patients in the neighbourhood to call on; so, you see, Marguerite, I shall have plenty to occupy my time."

"That's all very well in the summer, but in winter it will be very different; and I am not altogether certain you would be acting charitably by Fanny Keats to get her to remain with you. What do you say now to take the management of Walter's bachelor establishment in London? I should think it a nice occupation for you, and I know he is greatly attached to you; so you would be doing him a pleasure as well."

"But how would this house go on without me?" said Martha.

"You have, I think, little to fear on that subject," replied Mrs. Thornbury. "Watkins, the

housekeeper, is a perfectly reliable person; and besides, you need never stop away more than a week or a fortnight at a time, if you are determined to perform your duties here in so conscientious a manner. Now the railway is open the journey is not at all fatiguing, and by an occasional visit to London the change of scene would no doubt do you good."

Martha promised to take the subject into her consideration, and the conversation gradually ceased. Candles were now brought in, Mrs. Thornbury resumed her book, and Martha, taking her spectacles from her pocket (for she had for some years been obliged to have recourse to them) commenced some embroidery; although, as before, neither the worker nor the reader had the least interest in their respective occupations. Possibly of the two, Martha was the most preoccupied, for she was at the moment turning over in her mind the very difficult question, whether she should inform her brother of her meeting with Morecombe. On the one side it appeared to her that, after the great kindness she and her sister's children had received at his hands, to keep a secret of so much importance

was hardly shewing him the amount of respect due to him as head of the family. On the other hand, she could not disguise from herself, that excellent as her brother's good qualities might be, he had at the same time his failings, and these were peculiarly of a nature to render it dangerous to let him know the truth. While liberal and kind-hearted to those he respected, and affectionate to members of his family, he was not only unforgiving where he had been offended, but his natural animosity against Morecombe was so great that Martha, as she had stated at their interview in the morning, feared it might overcome his prudence, and by the scandal it would occasion, bring before the public the unfortunate union her sister had made, and which was now almost forgotten. Again, she felt the danger of giving offence, or at any rate pain, to Mr. Keats and Fanny, should her brother's anger make that lamentable affair public, and this came before her with such force as to counterbalance to a considerable extent her wish to inform Edgar of her having seen Morecombe.

Over and over again did Martha turn the subject in her mind, without being able to come

to any decision; while Mrs. Thornbury was equally absorbed on points of interest, though of a totally different description. With her the preparations she should make for her contemplated journey to Calcutta were at first uppermost; but as time advanced, the prevailing feeling in her mind was that of anxiety for her husband's return. She calculated exactly the time the train would take to reach X——, and attempted to form some conclusion how long Edgar would remain with Mr. Keats, though on the latter point she could arrive at nothing definite. In this manner the sisters-in-law, each in perfect silence, indulged the current of her thoughts, till the clock on the chimney-piece struck eleven, when both simultaneously raised their eyes, and glanced at each other with an expression of mingled anxiety and curiosity.

"Do you not think, dear," said Mrs. Thornbury, "that Edgar is very late?"

The same idea had struck Martha, but wishing to allay any symptoms of anxiety in the mind of her sister-in-law, she merely said,

"Not particularly so. The usual hour for the Keats to retire for the night is ten o'clock,

but possibly to-night they may have delayed it a little longer; and I daresay Edgar will remain with them till the last moment. It will then take him full half an hour to arrive here, especially as the night threatened to be a gloomy one, and he would not be able to drive at a rapid pace. I have no doubt he will soon be here."

"I hope it is not a wet night," said Mrs. Thornbury.

"I trust not," remarked Martha; "but I will soon ascertain," and rising from her seat, she drew back the curtains from the glass door communicating with the conservatory, which she opened, and then heard a heavy rain pattering on the glass roof.

Martha now closed the door, and seating herself beside Mrs. Thornbury, said—

"I am sorry to say, dear, it is raining fast; but I think you have no cause to make yourself uneasy on that account, as it must have began before Edgar left the Keats'. I am sure they would not let him depart without seeing that he was well protected from the weather, even assuming that he had not made preparations for it himself."

The sisters-in-law now became silent, but neither of them attempted to resume her occupation, Mrs. Thornbury's book lying quietly on the sofa, and Martha's embroidery-frame standing unnoticed by her side. Both, however, glanced continually at the clock, watching anxiously the progress of a minute hand, and listening acutely for the noise of the pony-chaise coming up the carriage drive. Still, no sound was audible beyond the ticking of the clock, which continued till it had struck the half-hour, when Mrs. Thornbury said to Martha,

"I am really getting very anxious, dear, about Edgar. What can possibly detain him?"

Martha, now being unable to give any reasonable excuse for her brother's delay, remained silent, and Mrs. Thornbury continued—

"I feel almost inclined to send one of the men with a lantern up the road to see that no accident has occurred."

"As you please," said Martha. "I will ring the bell, if you like. But I think you have no cause to apprehend any accident having befallen Edgar."

Martha's countenance, however, strangely be-

lied her words, for if anxiety was portrayed on Mrs. Thornbury's, positive terror was on that of Martha. Even her sister-in-law, absorbed as she was in her own anxiety, noticed it, and said to her,

"Are you not well, dear?"

"Yes, thank you," replied Martha, seating herself before having rung the bell—"at least, a sensation of giddiness has just come over me I cannot account for. I almost feel as if I should faint, but it will go off in a minute, I have no doubt," she continued, as she again rose from her chair, and this time rang the bell.

The servant had hardly entered the room, in answer to its summons, when the hall bell was heard.

"At last!" said Martha, rising from her seat, "here he is!" and both she and Mrs. Thornbury quitted the room, and rushed to the outer door.

The servant quickly opened it. Instead of Edgar Thornbury entering the house as they expected, no one at first was visible, but Martha, advancing towards the top of the flight of steps, perceived, by the light of the lamp burning in the hall, the figure of the lodge-keeper standing

in the gravel road holding her pony's head. Although the rain was descending in torrents at the time, Martha ran down the steps to question the man on what had taken place, and she then saw the shaft of the pony carriage hanging to the harness. She was too breathless with surprise to ask any questions, but the lodge-keeper told her that he and his wife had been sitting up to open the gates for his master. A few minutes since he heard the noise of some one apparently trying to force open the gates, and on leaving the lodge, he found the pony with the shafts attached to it as Martha there saw it. He said he had gone up the road a short distance, to see if he could find any traces of the carriage, but being unable to do so, he thought it better to come to the house for orders.

Martha was on the point of answering him, when her attention was attracted another way. Mrs. Thornbury, on seeing the condition the pony was in, and hearing the man's remarks, had fainted, and fallen with great violence upon the floor of the hall. Martha quickly went indoors, and assisted in carrying her sister-in-law

into the drawing-room, and placing her on the sofa. The usual restoratives were now sought for, and in a short time Mrs. Thornbury gave signs of a return to consciousness, which, however, was followed by a violent fit of hysterics, which threatened to be of some duration.

Martha had now somewhat recovered her self-possession; and here a remarkable instance of her singular mental organization developed itself. During the evening she had remained silent and reserved, and when the first idea of a possible accident having befallen her brother occurred to her, it was with difficulty she kept herself from fainting. Now that there was every appearance of a serious one having taken place, and seeing the present helpless condition of her sister-in-law, her nature seemed to have changed, and from the delicate sensitive woman she appeared to have assumed a strength of mind equal to any emergency. Turning round to the lodge-keeper, she told him to obtain the assistance of one of the gardeners, and each with lanterns to accompany her up the road. She then gave orders that the stable man should saddle one of his master's horses, and

without delay proceed to X——, to request the immediate attendance of Dr. Wilson. Then leaving Mrs. Thornbury to the care of the servants, she told her maid to bring her the cloak she was accustomed to wear when driving in bad weather, and placing the hood over her head, she started off in quest of her brother, accompanied by the lodge-keeper and the gardener, with their lanterns.

So complete was Martha's self-possession, that she ordered the lodge-keeper to walk on one side, and the gardener at the other, so that they could examine the ditches on each side of the way, while she kept to the centre of the road. Onward they went, slowly and without a word passing between them; Martha, as she walked, not only examining the road, but casting anxious glances on each side, to see that the men with the lanterns passed nothing unobserved. In this manner they continued their way, the rain pouring heavily the while, till they had reached about half way between the Red House and the "Brick-makers' Arms," when the sound of a horse's hoof was heard on the road behind them.

"It's only John, ma'am," said the lodge-keeper, "whom you told to go to Dr. Wilson. He hadn't started by the time you left the house."

John now reached them, who, seeing the lighted lanterns, pulled up to hear if any further instructions were to be given him.

"Why are you so late?" said Martha, somewhat angrily to him. "You ought to have been nearly at X—— by this time. What has occurred to detain you?"

"Well, ma'am, I first had to put up the pony, he was in such a dreadful state," said John, "bruised all over his hocks by the shafts striking against his heels. And then when I had saddled the horse the idea struck me that you would have some difficulty in getting the chaise back when you'd found it, and so I thought I'd better bring a piece of rope with me, and that took me some little to find."

"You ought not to have stopped for anything of the kind," said the lodge-keeper, "but when you had received your orders have started off at once."

"Well," said John, "I hadn't the heart not to

take the harness from that poor pony, and rub him down a little before putting him in his stall. It would have been as bad as murder, that at any rate."

Martha, seeing that a quarrel was likely to arise between John and the lodge-keeper, thought it time to interfere.

"Do not delay any longer, then, but go on your errand, unless you see anything of the chaise on your road, and in that case come back and tell us."

The man now threw the rope he had brought with him to the lodge-keeper, and started off again at a slow trot, Martha and her assistants continuing their search along the road. They could find, however, no trace of the pony-chaise, and had proceeded about a few hundred paces further on, when Martha said she heard a man's voice calling to them. They listened attentively for a moment without distinguishing anything.

"I could almost be certain," said Martha, "I heard some one call."

"I hardly think so, ma'am," said the lodge-keeper, "the rain is pouring down too heavily

to allow a man's voice to reach so far."

Again, however, the sound seemed to reach Martha's ears, although inaudible to the others, and she told them to hurry on faster, being careful at the same time to see they passed nothing on the way. Martha was right in her conjectures, for, after having proceeded a short distance, they all three heard John's voice calling to them to advance. When they had reached him they found he was standing by the pony-carriage, which had been thrown on its side, with the shafts broken off, but no one was near it.

They now, with the aid of lanterns, proceeded to examine the spot more carefully, when the lodge-keeper came rapidly to a conclusion as to the cause of the present condition of the pony-chaise.

"You see, ma'am," he said to Martha, "the marks of wheels tearing up the side of the ditch, and the print of the pony's hoofs on the road, which, in spite of the wet upon them are still plain enough that he had been driven into the ditch, and in his struggles to get out of it again, had snapped off the shafts. Now, I think in the first place, we had better right the chaise, it

won't take a minute, and then trace further back."

"No, no," said Martha, "let us continue on without delay. The chaise won't do any harm where it is, nobody will be coming along at this time of night. Let us go on."

They now proceeded, cautiously tracing the marks of the pony-chaise by the side of the ditch, which were here and there perceptible, for so much rain had fallen that the ditch was half full of water. The lodge-keeper now kept a little in advance, the gardener with his lantern walking by the side of Martha, and John, who had dismounted from his horse, bringing up the rear.

Martha's anxiety was now almost overwhelming. Perfectly insensible to the torrents of rain which were pouring down on her, she continued her search, making the man with the lantern hold it so that she could examine every spot as they passed—still no trace of her brother could be found. Presently they came to a place in the ditch where a considerable portion had evidently been broken away with great violence, and there were marks of the wheels plainly visible.

"That poor pony, ma'am," said the man with the lantern, "must have struggled very hard to get out here. Look at the marks of his hoofs as well as the wheels of the chaise; but he couldn't manage it, you see."

"No, the ditch was too deep for him," said John; "and the poor brute must have struggled along further. You can trace the marks of a wheel here, ma'am, you see, plain enough."

While Martha had been examining the spot, the lodge-keeper had advanced several paces, when suddenly he stopped, and then turning round to Martha, who was now advancing, said to her in a terrified tone of voice,

"Oh! ma'am, I think you'd better not go further. Let us manage it by ourselves; you'd better go home."

From the tone of the man's voice, Martha perceived he had made some alarming discovery, and, giving him no answer, she pressed onwards, taking the lantern from his hand as she passed him. She had advanced but a few paces when she reached the object which had caused the lodge-keeper so much alarm. It was the apparently lifeless form of a man stretched on the

ground so close to the edge of the water in the ditch that his feet and one arm were immersed in it. Uttering a cry of terror, Martha raised the lantern to his face, when she let it fall from her hand, and sank senseless on the ground. Notwithstanding the blood and mud which partially concealed his face, she had recognised the features of her nephew—Walter Thornbury.

END OF THE SECOND VOLUME.

LONDON: PRINTED BY MACDONALD AND TUGWELL BLENHEIM HOUSE.